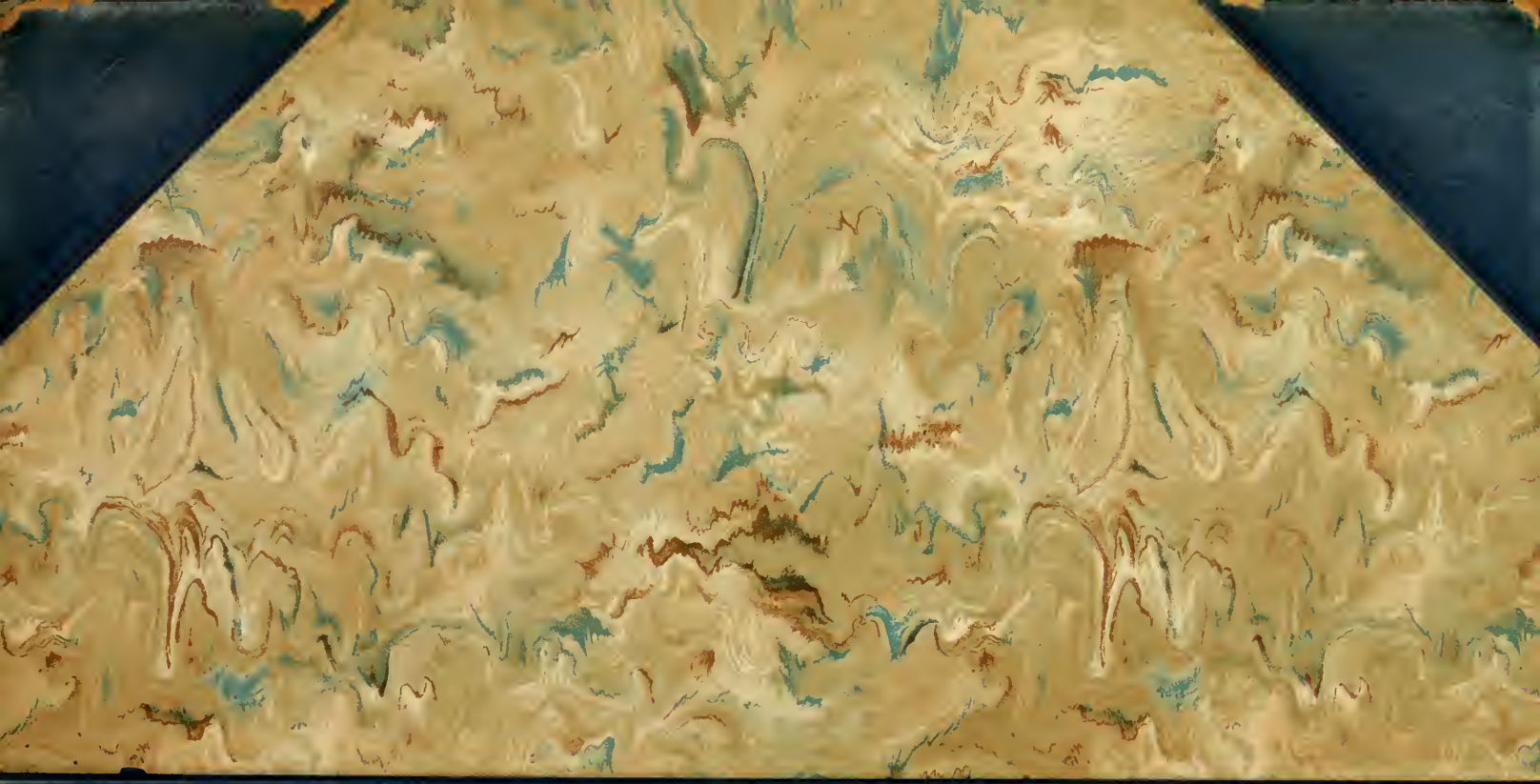

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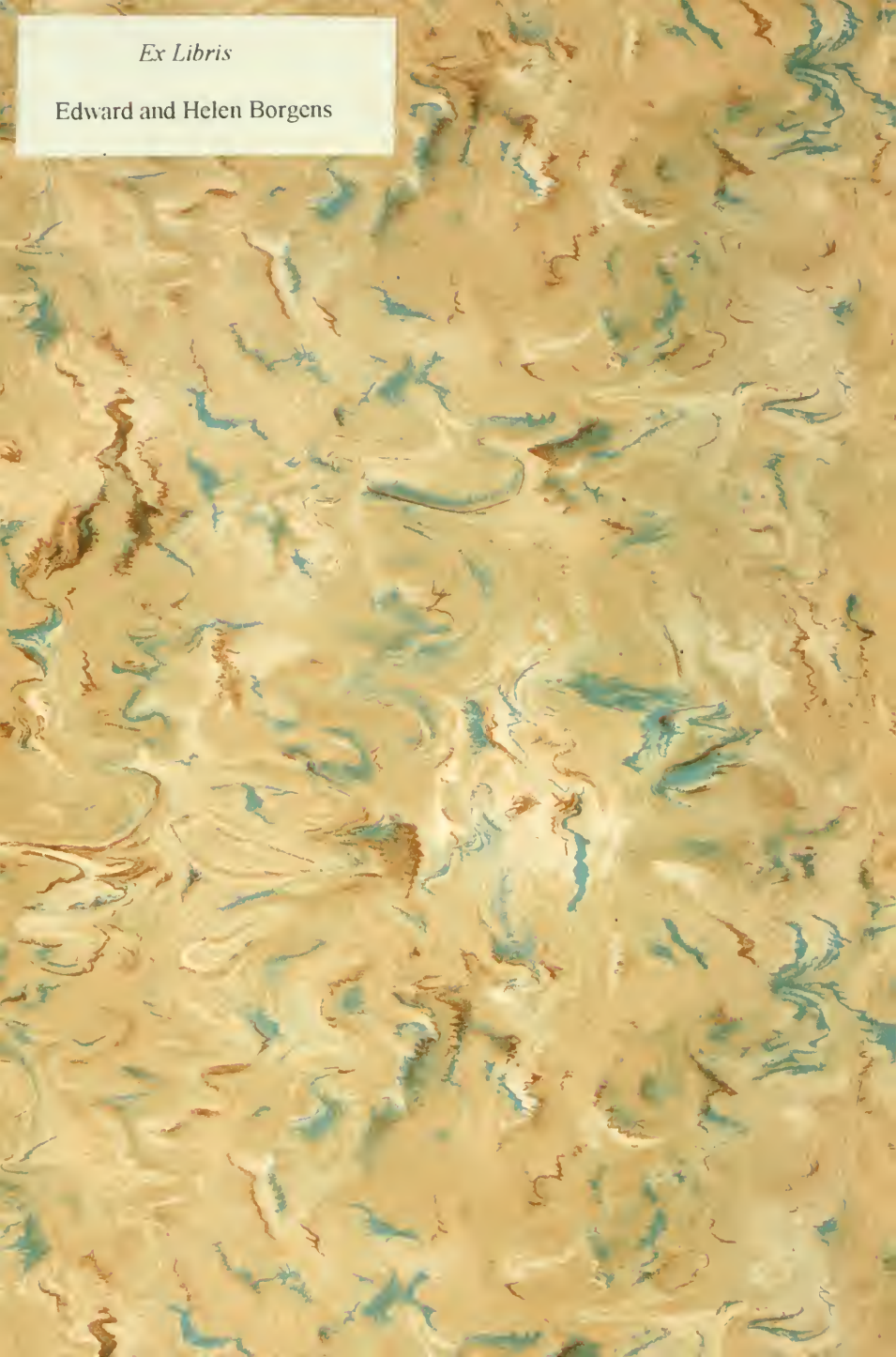


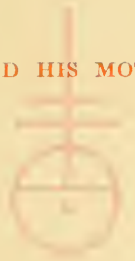
THE WORKS OF

GEORGE ELIOT

IN TWENTY VOLUMES

LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND
REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH
THIS IS NUMBER .....

HAROLD AND HIS MOTHER



"And you will put the crown to the mortifications of my life, Harold"

(Page 56)

THE WORKS OF GEORGE ELIOT

VOLUME FIFTEEN

FELIX HOLT

PART I.

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Illustrations

"And you will put the crown to the mortifications of my life, Harold" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

He was looking up at her quite calmly . . PAGE 380

Felix Holt, The Radical

INTRODUCTION

FIVE-AND-THIRTY years ago the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads; the great road-side inns were still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers; the mail still announced itself by the merry notes of the horn; the hedge-cutter or the rick-thatcher might still know the exact hour by the unfailing yet otherwise meteoric apparition of the pea-green Tally-ho or the yellow Independent; and elderly gentlemen in pony chaises, quartering nervously to make way for the rolling, swinging swiftness, had not ceased to remark that times were finely changed since they used to see the pack-horses and hear the tinkling of their bells on this very highway.

In those days there were pocket boroughs, a Birmingham unrepresented in Parliament and compelled to make strong representations out of it, unrepealed corn-laws, three-and-sixpenny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils; but there were some pleasant things, too, which have also departed. *Non omnia grandior ætas quæ fugiamus habet*, says the wise goddess: you have not the best of

it in all things, O youngsters! the elderly man has his enviable memories; and not the least of them is the memory of a long journey in mid-spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach. Posterity may be shot, like a bullet through a tube, by atmospheric pressure from Winchester to Newcastle, — that is a fine result to have among our hopes; but the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory. The tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory Oh! Whereas the happy outside passenger seated on the box from the dawn to the gloaming gathered enough stories of English life, enough of English labours in town and country, enough aspects of earth and sky, to make episodes for a modern Odyssey. Suppose only that his journey took him through that central plain, watered at one extremity by the Avon, at the other by the Trent. As the morning silvered the meadows with their long lines of bushy willows marking the watercourses, or burnished the golden corn-ricks clustered near the long roofs of some midland homestead, he saw the full-uddered cows driven from their pasture to the early milking. Perhaps it was the shepherd, head-servant of the farm, who drove them, his sheep-dog following with a heedless, unofficial air as of a beadle in undress. The shepherd with a slow and slouching walk, timed by the walk of grazing beasts, moved aside, as if unwillingly, throwing out a monosyllabic hint to his cattle; his glance, accustomed to rest on things very near the earth, seemed to lift it-

self with difficulty to the coachman. Mail or stage coach for him belonged to that mysterious distant system of things called "Gover'ment," which, whatever it might be, was no business of his, any more than the most outlying nebula or the coal-sacks of the southern hemisphere; his solar system was the parish; the master's temper and the casualties of lambing-time were his region of storms. He cut his bread and bacon with his pocket-knife, and felt no bitterness except in the matter of pauper labourers and the bad luck that sent contrarious seasons and the sheep-rot. He and his cows were soon left behind, and the homestead too, with its pond overhung by elder-trees, its untidy kitchen-garden, and cone-shaped yew-tree arbour. But everywhere the bushy hedgerows wasted the land with their straggling beauty, shrouded the grassy borders of the pastures with catkined hazels, and tossed their long blackberry branches on the cornfield. Perhaps they were white with May, or starred with pale pink dog-roses; perhaps the urchins were already nutting amongst them, or gathering the plenteous crabs. It was worth the journey only to see those hedgerows, the liberal homes of unmarketable beauty, — of the purple-blossomed ruby-berried nightshade, of the wild convolvulus climbing and spreading in tendrilled strength till it made a great curtain of pale-green hearts and white trumpets, of the many-tubed honeysuckle which in its most delicate fragrance hid a charm more subtle and penetrating than beauty. Even if it were winter, the hedgerows showed their coral, the scarlet haws, the deep-crimson hips, with lingering brown

leaves to make a resting-place for the jewels of the hoar-frost. Such hedgerows were often as tall as the labourers' cottages dotted along the lanes, or clustered into a small hamlet, their little dingy windows telling, like thick-filmed eyes, of nothing but the darkness within. The passenger on the coach-box, bowled along above such a hamlet, saw chiefly the roofs of it; probably turned its back on the road, and seemed to lie away from everything but its own patch of earth and sky, away from the parish church by long fields and green lanes, away from all intercourse except that of tramps. If its face could be seen, it was most likely dirty; but the dirt was Protestant dirt, and the big, bold, gin-breathing tramps were Protestant tramps. There was no sign of superstition near, no crucifix or image to indicate a misguided reverence; the inhabitants were probably so free from superstition that they were in much less awe of the parson than of the overseer. Yet they were saved from the excesses of Protestantism by not knowing how to read, and by the absence of handlooms and mines to be the pioneers of Dissent; they were kept safely in the *via media* of indifference, and could have registered themselves in the census by a big black mark as members of the Church of England.

But there were trim, cheerful villages too, with a neat or handsome parsonage and gray church set in the midst; there was the pleasant tinkle of the blacksmith's anvil, the patient cart-horses waiting at his door; the basket-maker peeling his willow wands in the sunshine; the wheelwright putting the last touch to a blue cart with

red wheels ; here and there a cottage with bright, transparent windows showing pots full of blooming balsams or geraniums, and little gardens in front all double daisies or dark wallflowers ; at the well, clean and comely women carrying yoked buckets, and towards the free school small Britons dawdling on, and handling their marbles in the pockets of unpatched corduroys adorned with brass buttons. The land around was rich and marly, great corn-stalks stood in the rick-yards, — for the rick-burners had not found their way hither ; the homesteads were those of rich farmers who paid no rent, or had the rare advantage of a lease, and could afford to keep their corn till prices had risen. The coach would be sure to overtake some of them on their way to their outlying fields or to the market-town, sitting heavily on their well-groomed horses, or weighing down one side of an olive-green gig. They probably thought of the coach with some contempt, as an accommodation for people who had not their own gigs, or who, wanting to travel to London and such distant places, belonged to the trading and less solid part of the nation. The passenger on the box could see that this was the district of protuberant optimists, sure that Old England was the best of all possible countries, and that if there were any facts which had not fallen under their own observation, they were facts not worth observing, — the district of clean little market-towns without manufactures, of fat livings, an aristocratic clergy, and low poor-rates. But as the day wore on, the scene would change ; the land would begin to be blackened with coal-pits, the rattle of hand-

looms to be heard in hamlets and villages. Here were powerful men, walking queerly with knees bent outward from squatting in the mine, going home to throw themselves down in their blackened flannel and sleep through the daylight, then rise and spend much of their high wages at the alehouse with their fellows of the Benefit Club ; here the pale, eager faces of handloom-weavers, men and women, haggard from sitting up late at night to finish the week's work, hardly begun till the Wednesday. Everywhere the cottages and the small children were dirty, for their languid mothers gave their strength to the loom,—pious Dissenting women, perhaps, who took life patiently, and thought that salvation depended chiefly on predestination, and not at all on cleanliness. The gables of Dissenting chapels now made a visible sign of religion, and of a meeting-place to counterbalance the alehouse, even in the hamlets ; but if a couple of old termagants were seen tearing each other's caps, it was a safe conclusion that if they had not received the sacraments of the Church, they had not at least given in to schismatic rites, and were free from the errors of Voluntaryism. The breath of the manufacturing town, which made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon, diffused itself over all the surrounding country, filling the air with eager unrest. Here was a population not convinced that Old England was as good as possible ; here were multitudinous men and women, aware that their religion was not exactly the religion of their rulers, who might therefore be better than they were, and who, if better,

might alter many things which now made the world perhaps more painful than it need be, and certainly more sinful. Yet there were the gray steeples too, and the churchyards, with their grassy mounds and venerable headstones, sleeping in the sunlight; there were broad fields and homesteads, and fine old woods covering a rising ground, or stretching far by the roadside, allowing only peeps at the park and mansion which they shut in from the working-day world. In these midland districts the traveller passed rapidly from one phase of English life to another: after looking down on a village dingy with coal-dust, noisy with the shaking of looms, he might skirt a parish all of fields, high hedges, and deep-rutted lanes; after the coach had rattled over the pavement of a manufacturing town, the scene of riots and trades-union meetings, it would take him in another ten minutes into a rural region, where the neighbourhood of the town was only felt in the advantages of a near market for corn, cheese, and hay, and where men with a considerable banking account were accustomed to say that "they never meddled with politics themselves." The busy scenes of the shuttle and the wheel, of the roaring furnace, of the shaft and the pulley, seemed to make but crowded nests in the midst of the large-spaced, slow-moving life of homesteads and far-away cottages and oak-sheltered parks. Looking at the dwellings scattered amongst the woody flats and the ploughed uplands, under the low gray sky which overhung them with an unchanging stillness as if Time itself were pausing, it was easy for the traveller to conceive

that town and country had no pulse in common, except where the handlooms made a far-reaching straggling fringe about the great centres of manufacture; that till the agitation about the Catholics in '29, rural Englishmen had hardly known more of Catholics than of the fossil mammals; and that their notion of Reform was a confused combination of rick-burners, trades-unions, Nottingham riots, and in general whatever required the calling out of the yeomanry. It was still easier to see that for the most part they resisted the rotation of crops, and stood by their fallows; and the coachman would perhaps tell how in one parish an innovating farmer, who talked of Sir Humphrey Davy, had been fairly driven out by popular dislike, as if he had been a confounded Radical; and how the parson having one Sunday preached from the words, "Break up your fallow-ground," the people thought he had made the text out of his own head, otherwise it would never have come "so pat" on a matter of business; but when they found it in the Bible at home, some said it was an argument for fallows (else why should the Bible mention fallows?), but a few of the weaker sort were shaken, and thought it was an argument that fallows should be done away with, else the Bible would have said, "Let your fallows lie;" and the next morning the parson had a stroke of apoplexy, which, as coincident with a dispute about fallows, so set the parish against the innovating farmer and the rotation of crops, that he could stand his ground no longer, and transferred his lease.

The coachman was an excellent travelling

companion and commentator on the landscape: he could tell the names of sites and persons, and explain the meaning of groups, as well as the shade of Virgil in a more memorable journey; he had as many stories about parishes, and the men and women in them, as the Wanderer in the "Excursion," only his style was different. His view of life had originally been genial, and such as became a man who was well warmed within and without, and held a position of easy, undisputed authority; but the recent initiation of railways had embittered him: he now, as in a perpetual vision, saw the ruined country strewn with shattered limbs, and regarded Mr. Huskisson's death as a proof of God's anger against Stephenson. "Why, every inn on the road would be shut up!" and at that word the coachman looked before him with the blank gaze of one who had driven his coach to the outermost edge of the universe, and saw his leaders plunging into the abyss. Still he would soon relapse from the high prophetic strain to the familiar one of narrative. He knew whose the land was wherever he drove; what noblemen had half ruined themselves by gambling; who made handsome returns of rent; and who was at daggers-drawn with his eldest son. He perhaps remembered the fathers of actual baronets, and knew stories of their extravagant or stingy housekeeping; whom they had married, whom they had horsewhipped, whether they were particular about preserving their game, and whether they had had much to do with canal companies. About any actual landed proprietor he could also tell whether he was a

Reformer or an Anti-Reformer. That was a distinction which had "turned up" in latter times, and along with it the paradox, very puzzling to the coachman's mind, that there were men of old family and large estate who voted for the Bill. He did not grapple with the paradox; he let it pass, with all the discreetness of an experienced theologian or learned scholiast, preferring to point his whip at some object which could raise no questions.

No such paradox troubled our coachman when, leaving the town of Treby Magna behind him, he drove between the hedges for a mile or so, crossed the queer long bridge over the river Lapp, and then put his horses to a swift gallop up the hill by the low-nestled village of Little Treby, till they were on the fine level road, skirted on one side by grand larches, oaks, and wych elms, which sometimes opened so far as to let the traveller see that there was a park behind them.

How many times in the year, as the coach rolled past the neglected-looking lodges which interrupted the screen of trees, and showed the river winding through a finely timbered park, had the coachman answered the same questions, or told the same things without being questioned! That? — oh, that was Transome Court, a place there had been a fine sight of lawsuits about. Generations back, the heir of the Transome name had somehow bargained away the estate, and it fell to the Durfeys, — very distant connections, who only called themselves Transomes because they had got the estate. But the Durfeys' claim had been disputed over and over

again; and the coachman, if he had been asked, would have said, though he might have to fall down dead the next minute, that property did n't always get into the right hands. However, the lawyers had found their luck in it; and people who inherited estates that were lawed about often lived in them as poorly as a mouse in a hollow cheese; and, by what he could make out, that had been the way with these present Durfeys, or Transomes, as they called themselves. As for Mr. Transome, he was as poor, half-witted a fellow as you 'd wish to see; but *she* was master, had come of a high family, and had a spirit, — you might see it in her eye and the way she sat her horse. Forty years ago, when she came into this country, they said she was a pictur'; but her family was poor, and so she took up with a hatchet-faced fellow like this Transome. And the eldest son had been just such another as his father, only worse, — a wild sort of half-natural, who got into bad company. They said his mother hated him, and wished him dead; for she 'd got another son, quite of a different cut, who had gone to foreign parts when he was a youngster, and she wanted her favourite to be heir. But heir or no heir, Lawyer Jermyn had had *his* picking out of the estate. Not a door in his big house but what was the finest polished oak, all got off the Transome estate. If anybody liked to believe he paid for it, they were welcome. However, Lawyer Jermyn had sat on that box-seat many and many a time. He had made the wills of most people thereabout. The coachman would not say that Lawyer

Jermyn was not the man he would choose to make his own will some day. It was not so well for a lawyer to be over-honest, else he might not be up to other people's tricks. And as for the Transome business, there had been ins and outs in time gone by, so that you could n't look into it straight backward. At this, Mr. Sampson (everybody in North Loamshire knew Sampson's coach) would screw his features into a grimace expressive of entire neutrality, and appear to aim his whip at a particular spot on the horse's flank. If the passenger was curious for further knowledge concerning the Transome affairs, Sampson would shake his head and say there had been fine stories in his time; but he never condescended to state what the stories were. Some attributed this reticence to a wise incredulity, others to a want of memory, others to simple ignorance. But at least Sampson was right in saying that there had been fine stories, — meaning, ironically, stories not altogether creditable to the parties concerned.

And such stories often come to be fine in a sense that is not ironical. For there is seldom any wrong-doing which does not carry along with it some downfall of blindly climbing hopes, some hard entail of suffering, some quickly satiated desire that survives, with the life in death of old paralytic vice, to see itself cursed by its woful progeny, — some tragic mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-stretching life that went before, and to the life that is to come after, such as has raised the pity and terror of men ever since they began to discern

between will and destiny. But these things are often unknown to the world; for there is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry of murder; robberies that leave man or woman forever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept secret by the sufferer, — committed to no sound except that of low moans in the night, seen in no writing except that made on the face by the slow months of suppressed anguish and early morning tears. Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear.

The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the underworld. The thornbushes there, and the thick-barked stems have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable.

CHAPTER I

He left me when the down upon his lip
I ay like the shadow of a hovering kiss.
"Beautiful mother, do not grieve," he said;
"I will be great, and build our fortunes high,
And you shall wear the longest train at court,
And look so queenly, all the lords shall say,
'She is a royal changeling: there's some crown
Lacks the right head, since hers wears nought but braids.'"
Oh, he is coming now, — but I am gray;
And he —

ON the 1st of September, in the memorable year 1832, some one was expected at Transome Court. As early as two o'clock in the afternoon the aged lodge-keeper had opened the heavy gate, green as the tree-trunks were green with Nature's powdery paint, deposited year after year. Already in the village of Little Treby, which lay on the side of a steep hill not far off the lodge gates, the elder matrons sat in their best gowns at the few cottage doors bordering the road, that they might be ready to get up and make their courtesy when a travelling carriage should come in sight; and beyond the village several small boys were stationed on the lookout, intending to run a race to the barn-like old church, where the sexton waited in the belfry ready to set the one bell in joyful agitation just at the right moment.

The old lodge-keeper had opened the gate and left it in the charge of his lame wife, because he was wanted at the Court to sweep away the leaves, and perhaps to help in the stables. For

though Transome Court was a large mansion, built in the fashion of Queen Anne's time, with a park and grounds as fine as any to be seen in Loamshire, there were very few servants about it. Especially, it seemed, there must be a lack of gardeners; for except on the terrace surrounded with a stone parapet in front of the house, where there was a parterre kept with some neatness, grass had spread itself over the gravel walks, and over all the low mounds once carefully cut as black beds for the shrubs and larger plants. Many of the windows had the shutters closed, and under the grand Scotch fir that stooped towards one corner, the brown fir-needles of many years lay in a small stone balcony in front of two such darkened windows. All round, both near and far, there were grand trees, motionless in the still sunshine, and, like all large motionless things, seeming to add to the stillness. Here and there a leaf fluttered down; petals fell in a silent shower; a heavy moth floated by, and when it settled, seemed to fall wearily; the tiny birds alighted on the walks, and hopped about in perfect tranquillity; even a stray rabbit sat nibbling a leaf that was to its liking, in the middle of a grassy space, with an air that seemed quite impudent in so timid a creature. No sound was to be heard louder than a sleepy hum, and the soft monotony of running water hurrying on to the river that divided the park. Standing on the south or east side of the house, you would never have guessed that an arrival was expected.

But on the west side, where the carriage entrance was, the gates under the stone archway

were thrown open; and so was the double door of the entrance-hall, letting in the warm light on the scagliola pillars, the marble statues, and the broad stone staircase, with its matting worn into large holes. And, stronger sign of expectation than all, from one of the doors which surrounded the entrance-hall, there came forth from time to time a lady, who walked lightly over the polished stone floor, and stood on the door-steps and watched and listened. She walked lightly, for her figure was slim and finely formed, though she was between fifty and sixty. She was a tall, proud-looking woman, with abundant gray hair, dark eyes and eyebrows, and a somewhat eagle-like yet not unfeminine face. Her tight-fitting black dress was much worn; the fine lace of her cuffs and collar, and of the small veil which fell backwards over her high comb, was visibly mended; but rare jewels flashed on her hands, which lay on her folded black-clad arms like finely cut onyx cameos.

Many times Mrs. Transome went to the door-steps, watching and listening in vain. Each time she returned to the same room; it was a moderate-sized comfortable room, with low ebony bookshelves round it, and it formed an anteroom to a large library, of which a glimpse could be seen through an open doorway, partly obstructed by a heavy tapestry curtain drawn on one side. There was a great deal of tarnished gilding and dinginess on the walls and furniture of this smaller room, but the pictures above the bookcases were all of a cheerful kind, — portraits in pastel of pearly-skinned ladies with hair-powder, blue ribbons, and low bodices; a splen-

did portrait in oils of a Transome in the gorgeous dress of the Restoration ; another of a Transome in his boyhood, with his hand on the neck of a small pony ; and a large Flemish battle-piece, where war seemed only a picturesque blue-and-red accident in a vast sunny expanse of plain and sky. Probably such cheerful pictures had been chosen because this was Mrs. Transome's usual sitting-room ; it was certainly for this reason that near the chair in which she seated herself each time she re-entered, there hung a picture of a youthful face which bore a strong resemblance to her own, — a beardless but masculine face, with rich brown hair hanging low on the forehead, and undulating beside each cheek down to the loose white cravat. Near this same chair were her writing-table, with vellum-covered account books on it, the cabinet in which she kept her neatly arranged drugs, her basket for her embroidery, a folio volume of architectural engravings from which she took her embroidery patterns, a number of the "North Loamshire Herald," and the cushion for her fat Blenheim, which was too old and sleepy to notice its mistress's restlessness. For just now Mrs. Transome could not abridge the sunny tedium of the day by the feeble interest of her usual indoor occupations. Her consciousness was absorbed by memories and prospects ; and except when she walked to the entrance-door to look out, she sat motionless with folded arms, involuntarily from time to time turning towards the portrait close by her, and as often, when its young brown eyes met hers, turning away again with self-checking resolution.

At last, prompted by some sudden thought or by some sound, she rose and went hastily beyond the tapestry curtain into the library. She paused near the door without speaking; apparently she only wished to see that no harm was being done. A man nearer seventy than sixty was in the act of ranging on a large library-table a series of shallow drawers, some of them containing dried insects, others mineralogical specimens. His pale mild eyes, receding lower jaw, and slight frame could never have expressed much vigour, either bodily or mental; but he had now the unevenness of gait and feebleness of gesture which tell of a past paralytic seizure. His threadbare clothes were thoroughly brushed; his soft white hair was carefully parted and arranged: he was not a neglected-looking old man; and at his side a fine black retriever, also old, sat on its haunches, and watched him as he went to and fro. But when Mrs. Transome appeared within the doorway, her husband paused in his work and shrank like a timid animal looked at in a cage where flight is impossible. He was conscious of a troublesome intention, for which he had been rebuked before, — that of disturbing all his specimens with a view to a new arrangement.

After an interval, in which his wife stood perfectly still, observing him, he began to put back the drawers in their places in the row of cabinets which extended under the bookshelves at one end of the library. When they were all put back and closed, Mrs. Transome turned away, and the frightened old man seated himself with Nimrod the retriever on an ottoman. Peeping

at him again, a few minutes after, she saw that he had his arm round Nimrod's neck, and was uttering his thoughts to the dog in a loud whisper, as little children do to any object near them when they believe themselves unwatched.

At last the sound of the church-bell reached Mrs. Transome's ear, and she knew that before long the sound of wheels must be within hearing; but she did not at once start up and walk to the entrance-door. She sat still, quivering and listening; her lips became pale, her hands were cold and trembling. Was her son really coming? She was far beyond fifty; and since her early gladness in this best-beloved boy, the harvests of her life had been scanty. Could it be that now — when her hair was gray, when sight had become one of the day's fatigues, when her young accomplishments seemed almost ludicrous, like the tone of her first harpsichord and the words of the songs long browned with age — she was going to reap an assured joy? — to feel that the doubtful deeds of her life were justified by the result, since a kind Providence had sanctioned them? — to be no longer tacitly pitied by her neighbours for her lack of money, her imbecile husband, her graceless eldest-born, and the loneliness of her life; but to have at her side a rich, clever, possibly a tender son? Yes; but there were the fifteen years of separation, and all that had happened in that long time to throw her into the background in her son's memory and affection. And yet — did not men sometimes become more filial in their feeling when experience had mellowed them, and they had themselves become fathers? Still, if Mrs. Transome

had expected only her son, she would have trembled less: she expected a little grandson also; and there were reasons why she had not been enraptured when her son had written to her only when he was on the eve of returning that he already had an heir born to him.

But the facts must be accepted as they stood; and, after all, the chief thing was to have her son back again. Such pride, such affection, such hopes as she cherished in this fifty-sixth year of her life must find their gratification in him — or nowhere. Once more she glanced at the portrait. The young brown eyes seemed to dwell on her pleasantly; but turning from it with a sort of impatience, and saying aloud, "Of course he will be altered!" she rose almost with difficulty, and walked more slowly than before across the hall to the entrance-door.

Already the sound of wheels was loud upon the gravel. The momentary surprise of seeing that it was only a post-chaise, without a servant or much luggage, that was passing under the stone archway and then wheeling round against the flight of stone steps, was at once merged in the sense that there was a dark face under a red travelling-cap looking at her from the window. She saw nothing else; she was not even conscious that the small group of her own servants had mustered, or that old Hickes the butler had come forward to open the chaise-door. She heard herself called "Mother!" and felt a light kiss on each cheek; but stronger than all that sensation was the consciousness which no previous thought could prepare her for, that this son who had come back to her was a stranger.

Three minutes before, she had fancied that in spite of all changes wrought by fifteen years of separation she should clasp her son again as she had done at their parting; but in the moment when their eyes met, the sense of strangeness came upon her like a terror. It was not hard to understand that she was agitated; and the son led her across the hall to the sitting-room, closing the door behind them. Then he turned towards her and said, smiling, —

"You would not have known me, eh, mother?"

It was perhaps the truth. If she had seen him in a crowd, she might have looked at him without recognition, — not, however, without startled wonder; for though the likeness to herself was no longer striking, the years had overlaid it with another likeness which would have arrested her. Before she answered him, his eyes, with a keen restlessness, as unlike as possible to the lingering gaze of the portrait, had travelled quickly over the room, alighting on her again as she said, —

"Everything is changed, Harold. I am an old woman, you see."

"But straighter and more upright than some of the young ones!" said Harold; inwardly, however, feeling that age had made his mother's face very anxious and eager. "The old women at Smyrna are like sacks. You've not got clumsy and shapeless. How is it I have the trick of getting fat?" (Here Harold lifted his arm and spread out his plump hand.) "I remember my father was as thin as a herring. How is my father? Where is he?"

Mrs. Transome just pointed to the curtain

doorway, and let her son pass through it alone. She was not given to tears; but now under the pressure of emotion that could find no other vent, they burst forth. She took care that they should be silent tears, and before Harold came out of the library again, they were dried. Mrs. Transome had not the feminine tendency to seek influence through pathos; she had been used to rule in virtue of acknowledged superiority. The consciousness that she had to make her son's acquaintance, and that her knowledge of the youth of nineteen might help her little in interpreting the man of thirty-four, had fallen like lead on her soul; but in this new acquaintance of theirs she cared especially that her son, who had seen a strange world, should feel that he was come home to a mother who was to be consulted on all things, and who could supply his lack of the local experience necessary to an English landholder. Her part in life had been that of the clever sinner, and she was equipped with the views, the reasons, and the habits which belonged to that character; life would have little meaning for her if she were to be gently thrust aside as a harmless elderly woman. And besides, there were secrets which her son must never know. So, by the time Harold came from the library again, the traces of tears were not discernible, except to a very careful observer. And he did not observe his mother carefully; his eyes only glanced at her on their way to the "North Loamshire Herald," lying on the table near her, which he took up with his left hand, as he said,—

"Gad! what a wreck poor father is! Paraly-

sis, eh? Terribly shrunk and shaken,— crawls about among his books and beetles as usual, though. Well, it's a slow and easy death. But he's not much over sixty-five, is he?"

"Sixty-seven, counting by birthdays; but your father was born old, I think," said Mrs. Transome, a little flushed with the determination not to show any unasked-for feeling.

Her son did not notice her. All the time he had been speaking his eyes had been running down the columns of the newspaper.

"But your little boy, Harold, — where is he? How is it he has not come with you?"

"Oh, I left him behind, in town," said Harold, still looking at the paper. "My man Dominic will bring him, with the rest of the luggage. Ah, I see it is young Debarry, and not my old friend, Sir Maximus, who is offering himself as candidate for North Loamshire."

"Yes. You did not answer me when I wrote to you to London about your standing. There is no other Tory candidate spoken of, and you would have all the Debarry interest."

"I hardly think that," said Harold, significantly.

"Why? Jermyn says a Tory candidate can never be got in without it."

"But I shall not be a Tory candidate."

Mrs. Transome felt something like an electric shock.

"What then?" she said, almost sharply. "You will not call yourself a Whig?"

"God forbid! I 'm a Radical."

Mrs. Transome's limbs tottered; she sank into a chair. Here was a distinct confirmation of

the vague but strong feeling that her son was a stranger to her. Here was a revelation to which it seemed almost as impossible to adjust her hopes and notions of a dignified life as if her son had said that he had been converted to Mahometanism at Smyrna, and had four wives, instead of one son, shortly to arrive under the care of Dominic. For the moment she had a sickening feeling that it was all of no use that the long-delayed good fortune had come at last, — all of no use, though the unloved Durfey was dead and buried, and though Harold had come home with plenty of money. There were rich Radicals, she was aware, as there were rich Jews and Dissenters, but she had never thought of them as county people. Sir Francis Burdett had been generally regarded as a madman. It was better to ask no questions, but silently to prepare herself for anything else there might be to come.

"Will you go to your rooms, Harold, and see if there is anything you would like to have altered?"

"Yes, let us go," said Harold, throwing down the newspaper, in which he had been rapidly reading almost every advertisement while his mother had been going through her sharp inward struggle. "Uncle Lingon is on the bench still, I see," he went on, as he followed her across the hall; "is he at home,—will he be here this evening?"

"He says you must go to the Rectory when you want to see him. You must remember you have come back to a family who have old-fashioned notions. Your uncle thought I ought

to have you to myself in the first hour or two. He remembered that I had not seen my son for fifteen years."

"Ah, by Jove! fifteen years, — so it is!" said Harold, taking his mother's hand and drawing it under his arm; for he had perceived that her words were charged with an intention. "And you are as straight as an arrow still; you will carry the shawls I have brought you as well as ever."

They walked up the broad stone steps together in silence. Under the shock of discovering her son's Radicalism, Mrs. Transome had no impulse to say one thing rather than another; as in a man who had just been branded on the forehead all wonted motives would be uprooted. Harold, on his side, had no wish opposed to filial kindness, but his busy thoughts were imperiously determined by habits which had no reference to any woman's feeling; and even if he could have conceived what his mother's feeling was, his mind, after that momentary arrest, would have darted forward on its usual course.

"I have given you the south rooms, Harold," said Mrs. Transome, as they passed along a corridor lit from above, and lined with old family pictures. "I thought they would suit you best, as they all open into each other, and this middle one will make a pleasant sitting-room for you."

"Gad! the furniture is in a bad state," said Harold, glancing round at the middle room, which they had just entered; "the moths seem to have got into the carpets and hangings."

"I had no choice except moths or tenants who would pay rent," said Mrs. Transome. "We have been too poor to keep servants for uninhabited rooms."

"What! you've been rather pinched, eh?"

"You find us living as we have been living these twelve years."

"Ah, you've had Durfey's debts as well as the lawsuits, — confound them! It will make a hole in sixty thousand pounds to pay off the mortgages. However, he's gone now, poor fellow; and I suppose I should have spent more in buying an English estate some time or other. I always meant to be an Englishman, and thrash a lord or two who thrashed me at Eton."

"I hardly thought you could have meant that, Harold, when I found you had married a foreign wife."

"Would you have had me wait for a consumptive lackadaisical Englishwoman, who would have hung all her relations round my neck? I hate English wives; they want to give their opinion about everything. They interfere with a man's life. I shall not marry again."

Mrs. Transome bit her lip, and turned away to draw up a blind. She would not reply to words which showed how completely any conception of herself and her feelings was excluded from her son's inward world.

As she turned round again, she said, "I suppose you have been used to great luxury; these rooms look miserable to you, but you can soon make any alteration you like."

"Oh, I must have a private sitting-room fitted up for myself downstairs. And the rest are bedrooms, I suppose," he went on, opening a side-door.

"Ah, I can sleep here a night or two. But there 's a bedroom downstairs, with an anteroom, I remember, that would do for my man Dominic and the little boy. I should like to have that."

"Your father has slept there for years. He will be like a distracted insect, and never know where to go, if you alter the track he has to walk in."

"That 's a pity. I hate going upstairs."

"There is the steward's room; it is not used, and might be turned into a bedroom. I can't offer you my room, for I sleep upstairs." (Mrs. Transome's tongue could be a whip upon occasion, but the lash had not fallen on a sensitive spot.)

"No; I 'm determined not to sleep upstairs. We 'll see about the steward's room to-morrow, and I dare say I shall find a closet of some sort for Dominic. It 's a nuisance he had to stay behind, for I shall have nobody to cook for me. Ah, there 's the old river I used to fish in. I often thought, when I was at Smyrna, that I would buy a park with a river through it as much like the Lapp as possible. Gad, what fine oaks those are opposite! Some of them must come down, though."

"I 've held every tree sacred on the demesne, as I told you, Harold. I trusted to your getting the estate some time, and releasing it; and I determined to keep it worth releasing. A park

without fine timber is no better than a beauty without teeth and hair."

"Bravo, mother!" said Harold, putting his hand on her shoulder. "Ah, you've had to worry yourself about things that don't properly belong to a woman, — my father being weakly. We'll set all that right. You shall have nothing to do now but to be grandmamma on satin cushions."

"You must excuse me from the satin cushions. That is a part of the old woman's duty I am not prepared for. I am used to be chief bailiff, and to sit in the saddle two or three hours every day. There are two farms on our hands besides the Home Farm."

"Phew-ew! Jermyn manages the estate badly, then. That will not last under *my* reign," said Harold, turning on his heel and feeling in his pockets for the keys of his portmanteaus, which had been brought up.

"Perhaps when you've been in England a little longer," said Mrs. Transome, colouring as if she had been a girl, "you will understand better the difficulty there is in letting farms in these times."

"I understand the difficulty perfectly, mother. To let farms, a man must have the sense to see what will make them inviting to farmers, and to get sense supplied on demand is just the most difficult transaction I know of. I suppose if I ring there's some fellow who can act as valet and learn to attend to my hookah?"

"There is Hickes the butler, and there is Jabez the footman; those are all the men in the house. They were here when you left."

"Oh, I remember Jabez, — he was a dolt. I 'll have old Hickes. He was a neat little machine of a butler; his words used to come like the clicks of an engine. He must be an old machine now, though."

"You seem to remember some things about home wonderfully well, Harold."

"Never forget places and people, — how they look and what can be done with them. All the country round here lies like a map in my brain. A deuced pretty country too; but the people were a stupid set of old Whigs and Tories. I suppose they are much as they were."

"I am, at least, Harold. You are the first of your family that ever talked of being a Radical. I did not think I was taking care of our old oaks for that. I always thought Radicals' houses stood staring above poor sticks of young trees and iron hurdles."

"Yes; but the Radical sticks are growing, mother, and half the Tory oaks are rotting," said Harold, with gay carelessness. "You 've arranged for Jermyn to be early to-morrow?"

"He will be here to breakfast at nine. But I leave you to Hickes now; we dine in an hour."

Mrs. Transome went away, and shut herself in her own dressing-room. It had come to pass now, — this meeting with the son who had been the object of so much longing; whom she had longed for before he was born, for whom she had sinned, from whom she had wrenched herself with pain at their parting, and whose coming again had been the one great hope of her years. The moment was gone by; there had been no ecstasy, no gladness even. Hardly half an hour

had passed, and few words had been spoken, yet with that quickness in weaving new futures which belongs to women whose actions have kept them in habitual fear of consequences, Mrs. Transome thought she saw with all the clearness of demonstration that her son's return had not been a good for her in the sense of making her any happier.

She stood before a tall mirror, going close to it and looking at her face with hard scrutiny, as if it were unrelated to herself. No elderly face can be handsome, looked at in that way: every little detail is startlingly prominent, and the effect of the whole is lost. She saw the dried-up complexion, and the deep lines of bitter discontent about the mouth.

"I am a hag," she said to herself (she was accustomed to give her thoughts a very sharp outline), "an ugly old woman who happens to be his mother. That is what he sees in me, as I see a stranger in him. I shall count for nothing. I was foolish to expect anything else."

She turned away from the mirror, and walked up and down her room.

"What a likeness!" she said, in a loud whisper; "yet, perhaps, no one will see it besides me."

She threw herself into a chair, and sat with a fixed look, seeing nothing that was actually present, but inwardly seeing with painful vividness what had been present with her a little more than thirty years ago, — the little round-limbed creature that had been leaning against her knees, and stamping tiny feet, and looking up at her with gurgling laughter. She had

thought that the possession of this child would give unity to her life, and make some gladness through the changing years that would grow as fruit out of these early maternal caresses. But nothing had come just as she had wished. The mother's early raptures had lasted but a short time; and even while they lasted there had grown up in the midst of them a hungry desire, like a black poisonous plant feeding in the sunlight, — the desire that her first, rickety, ugly, imbecile child should die, and leave room for her darling, of whom she could be proud. Such desires make life a hideous lottery, where every day may turn up a blank; where men and women who have the softest beds and the most delicate eating, who have a very large share of that sky and earth which some are born to have no more of than the fraction to be got in a crowded entry, yet grow haggard, fevered, and restless, like those who watch in other lotteries. Day after day, year after year, had yielded blanks; new cares had come, bringing other desires for results quite beyond her grasp, which must also be watched for in the lottery; and all the while the round-limbed pet had been growing into a strong youth, who liked many things better than his mother's caresses, and who had a much keener consciousness of his independent existence than of his relation to her; the lizard's egg — that white, rounded, passive prettiness — had become a brown, darting, determined lizard. The mother's love is at first an absorbing delight, blunting all other sensibilities; it is an expansion of the animal existence; it enlarges the imagined range for self to move in: but in after years it

can only continue to be joy on the same terms as other long-lived love, — that is, by much suppression of self, and power of living in the experience of another. Mrs. Transome had darkly felt the pressure of that unchangeable fact. Yet she had clung to the belief that somehow the possession of this son was the best thing she lived for; to believe otherwise would have made her memory too ghastly a companion. Some time or other, by some means the estate she was struggling to save from the grasp of the law would be Harold's. Somehow the hated Durfey, the imbecile eldest, who seemed to have become tenacious of a despicable squandering life, would be got rid of; vice might kill him. Meanwhile the estate was burthened; there was no good prospect for any heir. Harold must go and make a career for himself; and this was what he was bent on, with a precocious clearness of perception as to the conditions on which he could hope for any advantages in life. Like most energetic natures, he had a strong faith in his luck; he had been gay at their parting, and had promised to make his fortune; and in spite of past disappointments, Harold's possible fortune still made some ground for his mother to plant her hopes in. His luck had not failed him; yet nothing had turned out according to her expectations. Her life had been like a spoiled, shabby pleasure-day, in which the music and the processions are all missed, and nothing is left at evening but the weariness of striving after what has been failed of. Harold had gone with the Embassy to Constantinople, under the patronage of a high relative, his mother's cousin; he was to

be a diplomatist, and work his way upward in public life. But his luck had taken another shape: he had saved the life of an Armenian banker, who in gratitude had offered him a prospect which his practical mind had preferred to the problematic promises of diplomacy and high-born cousinship. Harold had become a merchant and banker at Smyrna; had let the years pass without caring to find the possibility of visiting his early home, and had shown no eagerness to make his life at all familiar to his mother, asking for letters about England, but writing scantily about himself. Mrs. Transome had kept up the habit of writing to her son, but gradually the unfruitful years had dulled her hopes and yearnings; increasing anxieties about money had worried her, and she was more sure of being fretted by bad news about her dissolute eldest son than of hearing anything to cheer her from Harold. She had begun to live merely in small immediate cares and occupations, and, like all eager-minded women who advance in life without any activity of tenderness or any large sympathy, she had contracted small rigid habits of thinking and acting, she had her "ways" which must not be crossed, and had learned to fill up the great void of life with giving small orders to tenants, insisting on medicines for infirm cottagers, winning small triumphs in bargains and personal economies, and parrying ill-natured remarks of Lady Debarry's by lancet-edged epigrams. So her life had gone on till more than a year ago, when that desire which had been so hungry when she was a blooming young mother was at last fulfilled, — at last,

when her hair was gray, and her face looked bitter, restless, and unenjoying, like her life. The news came from Jersey that Durfey, the imbecile son, was dead. *Now* Harold was heir to the estate; now the wealth he had gained could release the land from its burthens; now he would think it worth while to return home. A change had at last come over her life, and the sunlight breaking the clouds at evening was pleasant, though the sun must sink before long. Hopes, affections, the sweeter part of her memories, started from their wintry sleep, and it once more seemed a great good to have had a second son who in some ways had cost her dearly. But again there were conditions she had not reckoned on. When the good tidings had been sent to Harold, and he had announced that he would return so soon as he could wind up his affairs, he had for the first time informed his mother that he had been married, that his Greek wife was no longer living, but that he should bring home a little boy, the finest and most desirable of heirs and grandsons. Harold, seated in his distant Smyrna home, considered that he was taking a rational view of what things must have become by this time at the old place in England, when he figured his mother as a good elderly lady, who would necessarily be delighted with the possession on any terms of a healthy grandchild, and would not mind much about the particulars of the long-concealed marriage.

Mrs. Transome had torn up that letter in a rage. But in the months which had elapsed before Harold could actually arrive, she had prepared herself as well as she could to suppress

all reproaches or queries which her son might resent, and to acquiesce in his evident wishes. The return was still looked for with longing; affection and satisfied pride would again warm her later years. She was ignorant what sort of man Harold had become now, and of course he must be changed in many ways; but though she told herself this, still the image that she knew, the image fondness clung to, necessarily prevailed over the negatives insisted on by her reason.

And so it was that when she had moved to the door to meet him, she had been sure that she should clasp her son again, and feel that he was the same who had been her boy, her little one, the loved child of her passionate youth. An hour seemed to have changed everything for her. A woman's hopes are woven of sunbeams; a shadow annihilates them. The shadow which had fallen over Mrs. Transome in this first interview with her son was the presentiment of her powerlessness. If things went wrong, if Harold got unpleasantly disposed in a certain direction where her chief dread had always lain, she seemed to foresee that her words would be of no avail. The keenness of her anxiety in this matter had served as insight; and Harold's rapidity, decision, and indifference to any impressions in others which did not further or impede his own purposes, had made themselves felt by her as much as she would have felt the unmanageable strength of a great bird which had alighted near her, and allowed her to stroke its wing for a moment because food lay near her.

Under the cold weight of these thoughts Mrs. Transome shivered. That physical reaction roused her from her reverie, and she could now hear the gentle knocking at the door to which she had been deaf before. Notwithstanding her activity and the fewness of her servants, she had never dressed herself without aid; nor would that small, neat, exquisitely clean old woman who now presented herself have wished that her labour should be saved at the expense of such a sacrifice on her lady's part. The small old woman was Mrs. Hickes, the butler's wife, who acted as housekeeper, lady's-maid, and superintendent of the kitchen, — the large stony scene of inconsiderable cooking. Forty years ago she had entered Mrs. Transome's service, when that lady was beautiful Miss Lingon; and her mistress still called her Denner, as she had done in the old days.

"The bell has rung, then, Denner, without my hearing it?" said Mrs. Transome, rising.

"Yes, madam," said Denner, reaching from a wardrobe an old black velvet dress trimmed with much-mended point, in which Mrs. Transome was wont to look queenly of an evening.

Denner had still strong eyes of that short-sighted kind which sees through the narrowest chink between the eyelashes. The physical contrast between the tall, eagle-faced, dark-eyed lady and the little peering waiting-woman, who had been round-featured and of pale, mealy complexion from her youth up, had doubtless had a strong influence in determining Denner's feeling towards her mistress, which was of that worshipful sort paid to a goddess in ages when

it was not thought necessary or likely that a goddess should be very moral. There were different orders of beings, — so ran Denner's creed, — and she belonged to another order than that to which her mistress belonged. She had a mind as sharp as a needle, and would have seen through and through the ridiculous pretensions of a born servant who did not submissively accept the rigid fate which had given her born superiors. She would have called such pretensions the wrigglings of a worm that tried to walk on its tail. There was a tacit understanding that Denner knew all her mistress's secrets, and her speech was plain and unflattering; yet with wonderful subtlety of instinct she never said anything which Mrs. Transome could feel humiliated by, as by a familiarity from a servant who knew too much. Denner identified her own dignity with that of her mistress. She was a hard-headed, godless little woman, but with a character to be reckoned on as you reckon on the qualities of iron.

Peering into Mrs. Transome's face, she saw clearly that the meeting with the son had been a disappointment in some way. She spoke with a refined accent, in a low, quick, monotonous tone, —

"Mr. Harold is drest; he shook me by the hand in the corridor, and was very pleasant."

"What an alteration, Denner! No likeness to me now."

"Handsome, though, spite of his being so browned and stout. There 's a fine presence about Mr. Harold. I remember you used to say, madam, there were some people you would

always know were in the room though they stood round a corner, and others you might never see till you ran against them. That 's as true as truth. And as for likenesses, thirty-five and sixty are not much alike, only to people's memories."

Mrs. Transome knew perfectly that Denner had divined her thoughts.

"I don't know how things will go on now; but it seems something too good to happen that they will go on well. I am afraid of ever expecting anything good again."

"That 's weakness, madam. Things don't happen because they 're bad or good, else all eggs would be addled or none at all, and at the most it is but six to the dozen. There 's good chances and bad chances, and nobody's luck is pulled only by one string."

"What a woman you are, Denner! You talk like a French infidel. It seems to me you are afraid of nothing. I have been full of fears all my life, — always seeing something or other hanging over me that I could n't bear to happen."

"Well, madam, put a good face on it, and don't seem to be on the lookout for crows, else you 'll set other people watching. Here you have a rich son come home, and the debts will all be paid, and you have your health and can ride about, and you 've such a face and figure, and will have if you live to be eighty, that everybody is cap in hand to you before they know who you are, — let me fasten up your veil a little higher; there 's a good deal of pleasure in life for you yet."

"Nonsense! there's no pleasure for old women, unless they get it out of tormenting other people. What are your pleasures, Denner, — besides being a slave to me?"

"Oh, there's pleasure in knowing one's not a fool, like half the people one sees about. And managing one's husband is some pleasure; and doing all one's business well. Why, if I've only got some orange flowers to candy, I should n't like to die till I see them all right. Then there's the sunshine now and then; I like that as the cats do. I look upon it, life is like our game at whist, when Banks and his wife come to the still-room of an evening. I don't enjoy the game much, but I like to play my cards well, and see what will be the end of it; and I want to see you make the best of your hand, madam, for your luck has been mine these forty years now. But I must go and see how Kitty dishes up the dinner, unless you have any more commands."

"No, Denner; I am going down immediately."

As Mrs. Transome descended the stone staircase in her old black velvet and point, her appearance justified Denner's personal compliment. She had that high-born imperious air which would have marked her as an object of hatred and reviling by a revolutionary mob. Her person was too typical of social distinctions to be passed by with indifference by any one; it would have fitted an empress in her own right, who had had to rule in spite of faction, to dare the violation of treaties and dread retributive invasions, to grasp after new territories,

to be defiant in desperate circumstances, and to feel a woman's hunger of the heart forever unsatisfied. Yet Mrs. Transome's cares and occupations had not been at all of an imperial sort. For thirty years she had led the monotonous narrowing life which used to be the lot of our poorer gentry; who never went to town, and were probably not on speaking terms with two out of the five families whose parks lay within the distance of a drive. When she was young she had been thought wonderfully clever and accomplished, and had been rather ambitious of intellectual superiority,—had secretly picked out for private reading the lighter parts of dangerous French authors,—and in company had been able to talk of Mr. Burke's style or of Chateaubriand's eloquence,—had laughed at the Lyrical Ballads, and admired Mr. Southey's Thalaba. She always thought that the dangerous French writers were wicked, and that her reading of them was a sin; but many sinful things were highly agreeable to her, and many things which she did not doubt to be good and true were dull and meaningless. She found ridicule of Biblical characters very amusing and she was interested in stories of illicit passion; but she believed all the while that truth and safety lay in due attendance on prayers and sermons, in the admirable doctrines and ritual of the Church of England, equally remote from Puritanism and Popery,—in fact, in such a view of this world and the next as would preserve the existing arrangements of English society quite unshaken, keeping down the obtrusiveness of the vulgar and the discontent of

the poor. The history of the Jews, she knew, ought to be preferred to any profane history; the Pagans, of course, were vicious, and their religions quite nonsensical, considered as religions, — but classical learning came from the Pagans; the Greeks were famous for sculpture; the Italians for painting; the middle ages were dark and Papistical; but now Christianity went hand in hand with civilization, and the providential government of the world, though a little confused and entangled in foreign countries, in our favoured land was clearly seen to be carried forward on Tory and Church of England principles, sustained by the succession of the House of Brunswick, and by sound English divines. For Miss Lingon had had a superior governess, who held that a woman should be able to write a good letter, and to express herself with propriety on general subjects. And it is astonishing how effective this education appeared in a handsome girl, who sat supremely well on horseback, sang and played a little, painted small figures in water-colours, had a naughty sparkle in her eyes when she made a daring quotation, and an air of serious dignity when she recited something from her store of correct opinions. But however such a stock of ideas may be made to tell in elegant society, and during a few seasons in town, no amount of bloom and beauty can make them a perennial source of interest in things not personal; and the notion that what is true and, in general, good for mankind, is stupid and drug-like, is not a safe theoretic basis in circumstances of temptation and difficulty. Mrs.

Transome had been in her bloom before this century began, and in the long painful years since then, what she had once regarded as her knowledge and accomplishments had become as valueless as old-fashioned stucco-ornaments, of which the substance was never worth anything, while the form is no longer to the taste of any living mortal. Crosses, mortifications, money-cares, conscious blameworthiness, had changed the aspect of the world for her: there was anxiety in the morning sunlight; there was unkind triumph or disapproving pity in the glances of greeting neighbours; there was advancing age, and a contracting prospect in the changing seasons as they came and went. And what could then sweeten the days to a hungry, much-exacting self like Mrs. Transome's? Under protracted ill every living creature will find something that makes a comparative ease, and even when life seems woven of pain, will convert the fainter pang into a desire. Mrs. Transome, whose imperious will had availed little to ward off the great evils of her life, found the opiate for her discontent in the exertion of her will about smaller things. She was not cruel, and could not enjoy thoroughly what she called the old woman's pleasure of tormenting; but she liked every little sign of power her lot had left her. She liked that a tenant should stand bareheaded below her as she sat on horseback. She liked to insist that work done without her orders should be undone from beginning to end. She liked to be courtesied and bowed to by all the congregation as she walked up the little barn of a church. She

liked to change a labourer's medicine fetched from the doctor, and substitute a prescription of her own. If she had only been more haggard and less majestic, those who had glimpses of her outward life might have said she was a tyrannical, griping harridan, with a tongue like a razor. No one said exactly that; but they never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under that outward life, — a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions, as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouching behind withered rubbish. The sensibility and dread had palpitated all the faster in the prospect of her son's return ; and now that she had seen him, she said to herself, in her bitter way : " It is a lucky eel that escapes skinning. The best happiness I shall ever know, will be to escape the worst misery."

CHAPTER II

A jolly parson of the good old stock,
By birth a gentleman, yet homely too,
Suiting his phrase to Hodge and Margery
Whom he once christened, and has married since.
A little lax in doctrine and in life,
Not thinking God was captious in such things
As what a man might drink on holidays,
But holding true religion was to do
As you'd be done by, — which could never mean
That he should preach three sermons in a week.

HAROLD TRANSOME did not choose to spend the whole evening with his mother. It was his habit to compress a great deal of effective conversation into a short space of time, asking rapidly all the questions he wanted to get answered, and dilating no subject with irrelevancies, paraphrase, or repetitions. He volunteered no information about himself and his past life at Smyrna, but answered pleasantly enough, though briefly, whenever his mother asked for any detail. He was evidently ill-satisfied as to his palate, trying red pepper to everything, then asking if there were any relishing sauces in the house, and when Hickes brought various home-filled bottles, trying several, finding them failures, and finally falling back from his plate in despair. Yet he remained good-humoured, saying something to his father now and then for the sake of being kind, and looking on with a pitying shrug as he saw him watch Hickes cutting his food. Mrs. Transome thought with some bitterness that

Harold showed more feeling for her feeble husband who had never cared in the least about him, than for her, who had given him more than the usual share of mother's love. An hour after dinner, Harold, who had already been turning over the leaves of his mother's account-books, said, —

"I shall just cross the park to the parsonage to see my uncle Lingon."

"Very well. He can answer more questions for you."

"Yes," said Harold, quite deaf to the innuendo, and accepting the words as a simple statement of the fact. "I want to hear all about the game and the North Loamshire hunt. I 'm fond of sport; we had a great deal of it at Smyrna, and it keeps down my fat."

The Rev. John Lingon became very talkative over his second bottle of port, which was opened on his nephew's arrival. He was not curious about the manners of Smyrna or about Harold's experience, but he unbosomed himself very freely as to what he himself liked and disliked, which of the farmers he suspected of killing the foxes, what game he had bagged that very morning, what spot he would recommend as a new cover, and the comparative flatness of all existing sport compared with cock-fighting, under which Old England had been prosperous and glorious, while, so far as he could see, it had gained little by the abolition of a practice which sharpened the faculties of men, gratified the instincts of the fowl, and carried out the designs of heaven in its admirable device of spurs. From these main topics, which made his points of departure and return,

he rambled easily enough at any new suggestion or query; so that when Harold got home at a late hour, he was conscious of having gathered from amidst the pompous, full-toned triviality of his uncle's chat some impressions which were of practical importance. Among the Rector's dislikes, it appeared, was Mr. Matthew Jermyn.

"A fat-handed, glib-tongued fellow, with a scented cambric handkerchief; one of your educated low-bred fellows; a foundling who got his Latin for nothing at Christ's Hospital; one of your middle-class upstarts who want to rank with gentlemen, and think they 'll do it with kid gloves and new furniture."

But since Harold meant to stand for the county, Mr. Lingon was equally emphatic as to the necessity of his not quarrelling with Jermyn till the election was over. Jermyn must be his agent; Harold must wink hard till he found himself safely returned; and even then it might be well to let Jermyn drop gently and raise no scandal. He himself had no quarrel with the fellow; a clergyman should have no quarrels, and he made it a point to be able to take wine with any man he met at table. And as to the estate, and his sister's going too much by Jermyn's advice, he never meddled with business; it was not his duty as a clergyman. That, he considered, was the meaning of Melchisedec and the tithe, — a subject into which he had gone to some depth thirty years ago, when he preached the Visitation sermon.

The discovery that Harold meant to stand on the Liberal side — nay, that he boldly declared himself a Radical — was rather startling; but to

his uncle's good-humour, beatified by the sipping of port-wine, nothing could seem highly objectionable, provided it did not disturb that operation. In the course of half an hour he had brought himself to see that anything really worthy to be called British Toryism had been entirely extinct since the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel had passed the Catholic Emancipation Bill; that Whiggery, with its rights of man stopping short at ten-pound householders, and its policy of pacifying a wild beast with a bite, was a ridiculous monstrosity; that therefore, since an honest man could not call himself a Tory, which it was, in fact, as impossible to be now as to fight for the old Pretender, and could still less become that execrable monstrosity a Whig, there remained but one course open to him. "Why, lad, if the world was turned into a swamp, I suppose we should leave off shoes and stockings, and walk about like cranes," — whence it followed plainly enough that in these hopeless times nothing was left to men of sense and good family but to retard the national ruin by declaring themselves Radicals, and take the inevitable process of changing everything out of the hands of beggarly demagogues and purse-proud tradesmen. It is true the Rector was helped to this chain of reasoning by Harold's remarks; but he soon became quite ardent in asserting the conclusion.

"If the mob can't be turned back, a man of family must try and head the mob, and save a few homes and hearths, and keep the country up on its last legs as long as he can. And you're a man of family, my lad, — dash it! you're a

Lingon, whatever else you may be, and I 'll stand by you. I 've no great interest; I 'm a poor parson. I 've been forced to give up hunting; my pointers and a glass of good wine are the only decencies becoming my station that I can allow myself. But I 'll give you my countenance, — I 'll stick to you as my nephew. There 's no need for me to change sides exactly. I was born a Tory, and I shall never be a bishop. But if anybody says you 're in the wrong, I shall say, 'My nephew is in the right; he has turned Radical to save his country. If William Pitt had been living now, he 'd have done the same; for what did he say when he was dying? Not "Oh, save my party!" but "Oh, save my country, Heaven!"' That was what they dinned in our ears about Peel and the Duke; and now I 'll turn it round upon them. They shall be hoist with their own petard. Yes, yes, I 'll stand by you."

Harold did not feel sure that his uncle would thoroughly retain this satisfactory thread of argument in the uninspired hours of the morning; but the old gentleman was sure to take the facts easily in the end, and there was no fear of family coolness or quarrelling on this side. Harold was glad of it. He was not to be turned aside from any course he had chosen; but he disliked all quarrelling as an unpleasant expenditure of energy that could have no good practical result. He was at once active and luxurious; fond of mastery, and good-natured enough to wish that every one about him should like his mastery; not caring greatly to know other people's thoughts, and ready to despise

them as blockheads if their thoughts differed from his, and yet solicitous that they should have no colourable reason for slight thoughts about *him*. The blockheads must be forced to respect him. Hence, in proportion as he foresaw that his equals in the neighbourhood would be indignant with him for his political choice, he cared keenly about making a good figure before them in every other way. His conduct as a landholder was to be judicious, his establishment was to be kept up generously, his imbecile father treated with careful regard, his family relations entirely without scandal. He knew that affairs had been unpleasant in his youth, — that there had been ugly lawsuits, — and that his scapegrace brother Durfey had helped to lower still farther the depressed condition of the family. All this must be retrieved, now that events had made Harold the head of the Transome name.

Jermyn must be used for the election, and after that, if he must be got rid of, it would be well to shake him loose quietly : his uncle was probably right on both these points. But Harold's expectation that he should want to get rid of Jermyn was founded on other reasons than his scented handkerchief and his charity-school Latin.

If the lawyer had been presuming on Mrs. Transome's ignorance as a woman, and on the stupid rakishness of the original heir, the new heir would prove to him that he had calculated rashly. Otherwise, Harold had no prejudice against him. In his boyhood and youth he had seen Jermyn frequenting Transome Court, but had regarded him with that total indifference

with which youngsters are apt to view those who neither deny them pleasures nor give them any. Jermyn used to smile at him, and speak to him affably; but Harold, half proud, half shy, got away from such patronage as soon as possible: he knew Jermyn was a man of business; his father, his uncle, and Sir Maximus Debarry did not regard him as a gentleman and their equal. He had known no evil of the man; but he saw now that if he were really a covetous upstart, there had been a temptation for him in the management of the Transome affairs; and it was clear that the estate was in a bad condition.

When Mr. Jermyn was ushered into the breakfast-room the next morning, Harold found him surprisingly little altered by the fifteen years. He was gray, but still remarkably handsome; fat, but tall enough to bear that trial to man's dignity. There was as strong a suggestion of toilet about him as if he had been five-and-twenty instead of nearly sixty. He chose always to dress in black, and was especially addicted to black satin waistcoats, which carried out the general sleekness of his appearance; and this, together with his white, fat, but beautifully shaped hands, which he was in the habit of rubbing gently on his entrance into a room, gave him very much the air of a lady's physician. Harold remembered with some amusement his uncle's dislike of those conspicuous hands; but as his own were soft and dimpled, and as he too was given to the innocent practice of rubbing those members, his suspicions were not yet deepened.

"I congratulate you, Mrs. Transome," said Jermyn, with a soft and deferential smile, "all the more," he added, turning towards Harold, "now I have the pleasure of actually seeing your son. I am glad to perceive that an Eastern climate has not been unfavourable to him."

"No," said Harold, shaking Jermyn's hand carelessly, and speaking with more than his usual rapid brusqueness, "the question is, whether the English climate will agree with me. It 's deuced shifting and damp; and as for the food, it would be the finest thing in the world for this country if the southern cooks would change their religion, get persecuted, and fly to England, as the old silk-weavers did."

"There are plenty of foreign cooks for those who are rich enough to pay for them, I suppose," said Mrs. Transome; "but they are unpleasant people to have about one's house."

"Gad! I don't think so," said Harold.

"The old servants are sure to quarrel with them."

"That 's no concern of mine. The old servants will have to put up with my man Dominic, who will show them how to cook and do everything else in a way that will rather astonish them."

"Old people are not so easily taught to change all their ways, Harold."

"Well, they can give up and watch the young ones," said Harold, thinking only at that moment of old Mrs. Hickes and Dominic. But his mother was not thinking of them only.

"You have a valuable servant, it seems," said Jermyn, who understood Mrs. Transome better than her son did, and wished to smoothen the current of their dialogue.

"Oh, one of those wonderful southern fellows that make one's life easy. He 's of no country in particular. I don't know whether he 's most of a Jew, a Greek, an Italian, or a Spaniard. He speaks five or six languages, one as well as another. He 's cook, valet, major-domo, and secretary all in one; and what 's more, he 's an affectionate fellow, — I can trust to his attachment. That 's a sort of human specimen that does n't grow here in England, I fancy. I should have been badly off if I could not have brought Dominic."

They sat down to breakfast with such slight talk as this going on. Each of the party was preoccupied and uneasy. Harold's mind was busy constructing probabilities about what he should discover of Jermyn's mismanagement or dubious application of funds, and the sort of self-command he must in the worst case exercise in order to use the man as long as he wanted him. Jermyn was closely observing Harold with an unpleasant sense that there was an expression of acuteness and determination about him which would make him formidable. He would certainly have preferred at that moment that there had been no second heir of the Transome name to come back upon him from the East. Mrs. Transome was not observing the two men; rather, her hands were cold, and her whole person shaken by their presence. She seemed to hear and see what they said and did with

preternatural acuteness, and yet she was also seeing and hearing what had been said and done many years before, and feeling a dim terror about the future. There were piteous sensibilities in this faded woman, who thirty-four years ago, in the splendour of her bloom, had been imperious to one of these men, and had rapturously pressed the other as an infant to her bosom, and now knew that she was of little consequence to either of them.

"Well, what are the prospects about the election?" said Harold, as the breakfast was advancing. "There are two Whigs and one Conservative likely to be in the field, I know. What is your opinion of the chances?"

Mr. Jermyn had a copious supply of words, which often led him into periphrase; but he cultivated a hesitating stammer, which, with a handsome impassiveness of face, except when he was smiling at a woman, or when the latent savageness of his nature was thoroughly roused, he had found useful in many relations, especially in business. No one could have found out that he was not at his ease. "My opinion," he replied, "is in a state of balance at present. This division of the county, you are aware, contains one manufacturing town of the first magnitude, and several smaller ones. The manufacturing interest is widely dispersed. So far — a — there is a presumption — a — in favour of the two Liberal candidates. Still, with a careful canvass of the agricultural districts, such as those we have round us at Treby Magna, I think — a — the auguries — a — would not be unfavourable to the return of a Conservative. A fourth candi-

date of good position, who should coalesce with Mr. Debarry — a — "

Here Mr. Jermyn hesitated for the third time, and Harold broke in, —

"That will not be my line of action, so we need not discuss it. If I put up, it will be as a Radical; and I fancy, in any county that would return Whigs there would be plenty of voters to be combed off by a Radical who offered himself with good pretensions."

There was the slightest possible quiver discernible across Jermyn's face. Otherwise he sat as he had done before, with his eyes fixed abstractedly on the frill of a ham before him, and his hand trifling with his fork. He did not answer immediately; but when he did, he looked round steadily at Harold.

"I 'm delighted to perceive that you have kept yourself so thoroughly acquainted with English politics."

"Oh, of course!" said Harold, impatiently. "I 'm aware how things have been going on in England. I always meant to come back ultimately. I suppose I know the state of Europe as well as if I 'd been stationary at Little Treby for the last fifteen years. If a man goes to the East, people seem to think he gets turned into something like the one-eyed calender in the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Yet I should think there are some things which people who have been stationary at Little Treby could tell you, Harold," said Mrs. Transome. "It did not signify about your holding Radical opinions at Smyrna; but you seem not to imagine how your putting up as a

Radical will affect your position here and the position of your family. No one will visit you. And then — the sort of people who will support you! You really have no idea what an impression it conveys when you say you are a Radical. There are none of our equals who will not feel that you have disgraced yourself."

"Pooh!" said Harold, rising and walking along the room.

But Mrs. Transome went on with growing anger in her voice: "It seems to me that a man owes something to his birth and station, and has no right to take up this notion or the other, just as it suits his fancy; still less to work at the overthrow of his class. That was what every one said of Lord Grey, and my family at least is as good as Lord Grey's. You have wealth now, and might distinguish yourself in the county; and if you had been true to your colours as a gentleman, you would have had all the greater opportunity because the times are so bad. The Debarrys and Lord Wyvern would have set all the more store by you. For my part, I can't conceive what good you propose to yourself. I only entreat you to think again before you take any decided step."

"Mother," said Harold, not angrily or with any raising of his voice, but in a quick, impatient manner, as if the scene must be got through as quickly as possible, "it is natural that you should think in this way. Women, very properly, don't change their views, but keep to the notions in which they have been brought up. It does n't signify what they think, — they are not called upon to judge or to act. You must

really leave me to take my own course in these matters, which properly belong to men. Beyond that I will gratify any wish you choose to mention. You shall have a new carriage and a pair of bays all to yourself; you shall have the house done up in first-rate style, and I am not thinking of marrying. But let us understand that there shall be no further collision between us on subjects on which I must be master of my own actions."

"And you will put the crown to the mortifications of my life, Harold. I don't know who would be a mother if she could foresee what a slight thing she will be to her son when she is old."

Mrs. Transome here walked out of the room by the nearest way, — the glass door open towards the terrace. Mr. Jermyn had risen too, and his hands were on the back of his chair. He looked quite impassive: it was not the first time he had seen Mrs. Transome angry; but now, for the first time, he thought the outburst of her temper would be useful to him. She, poor woman, knew quite well that she had been unwise, and that she had been making herself disagreeable to Harold to no purpose. But half the sorrows of women would be averted if they could repress the speech they know to be useless, — nay, the speech they have resolved not to utter. Harold continued his walking a moment longer, and then said to Jermyn, —

"You smoke?"

"No, I always defer to the ladies. Mrs. Jermyn is peculiarly sensitive in such matters, and does n't like tobacco."

Harold, who, underneath all the tendencies

which had made him a Liberal, had intense personal pride, thought: "Confound the fellow — with his Mrs. Jermyn! Does he think we are on a footing for me to know anything about his wife?"

"Well, I took my hookah before breakfast," he said aloud; "so, if you like, we 'll go into the library. My father never gets up till mid-day, I find."

"Sit down, sit down!" said Harold, as they entered the handsome, spacious library. But he himself continued to stand before a map of the county which he had opened from a series of rollers occupying a compartment among the book-shelves. "The first question, Mr. Jermyn, now you know my intentions, is, whether you will undertake to be my agent in this election, and help me through? There 's no time to be lost, and I don't want to lose my chance, as I may not have another for seven years. I understand," he went on, flashing a look straight at Jermyn, "that you have not taken any conspicuous course in politics; and I know that Labron is agent for the Debarrys."

"Oh — a — my dear sir — a man necessarily has his political convictions, but of what use is it for a professional man — a — of some education, to talk of them in a little country town? There really is no comprehension of public questions in such places. Party feeling, indeed, was quite asleep here before the agitation about the Catholic Relief Bill. It is true that I concurred with our incumbent in getting up a petition against the Reform Bill, but I did not state my reasons. The weak points in that Bill are — a — too

palpable, and I fancy you and I should not differ much on that head. The fact is, when I knew that you were to come back to us, I kept myself in reserve, though I was much pressed by the friends of Sir James Clement, the Ministerial candidate, who is — "

"However, you will act for me, — that's settled?" said Harold.

"Certainly," said Jermyn, inwardly irritated by Harold's rapid manner of cutting him short.

"Which of the Liberal candidates, as they call themselves, has the better chance, eh?"

"I was going to observe that Sir James Clement has not so good a chance as Mr. Garstin, supposing that a third Liberal candidate presents himself. There are two senses in which a politician can be liberal," — here Mr. Jermyn smiled, — "Sir James Clement is a poor baronet, hoping for an appointment, and can't be expected to be liberal in that wider sense which commands majorities."

"I wish this man were not so much of a talker," thought Harold; "he'll bore me. We shall see," he said aloud, "what can be done in the way of combination. I'll come down to your office after one o'clock if it will suit you?"

"Perfectly."

"Ah, and you'll have all the lists and papers and necessary information ready for me there. I must get up a dinner for the tenants, and we can invite whom we like besides the tenants. Just now, I'm going over one of the farms on hand with the bailiff. By the way, that's a desperately bad business, having three farms unlet, — how comes that about, eh?"

"That is precisely what I wanted to say a few words about to you. You have observed already how strongly Mrs. Transome takes certain things to heart. You can imagine that she has been severely tried in many ways. Mr. Transome's want of health; Mr. Durfey's habits — a — "

"Yes, yes."

"She is a woman for whom I naturally entertain the highest respect, and she has had hardly any gratification for many years, except the sense of having affairs to a certain extent in her own hands. She objects to changes; she will not have a new style of tenants; she likes the old stock of farmers who milk their own cows, and send their younger daughters out to service: all this makes it difficult to do the best with the estate. I am aware things are not as they ought to be, for, in point of fact, an improved agricultural management is a matter in which I take considerable interest, and the farm which I myself hold on the estate you will see, I think, to be in a superior condition. But Mrs. Transome is a woman of strong feeling, and I would urge you, my dear sir, to make the changes which you have, but which I had not, the right to insist on, as little painful to her as possible."

"I shall know what to do, sir, never fear," said Harold, much offended.

"You will pardon, I hope, a perhaps undue freedom of suggestion from a man of my age, who has been so long in a close connection with the family affairs — a — I have never considered that connection simply in the light of business — a —"

"Damn him, I 'll soon let him know that *I* do," thought Harold. But in proportion as he

found Jermyn's manners annoying, he felt the necessity of controlling himself. He despised all persons who defeated their own projects by the indulgence of momentary impulses.

"I understand, I understand," he said aloud. "You 've had more awkward business on your hands than usually falls to the share of a family lawyer. We shall set everything right by degrees. But now as to the canvassing. I 've made arrangements with a first-rate man in London, who understands these matters thoroughly, — a solicitor of course, — he has carried no end of men into Parliament. I 'll engage him to meet us at Duffield — say when?"

The conversation after this was driven carefully clear of all angles, and ended with determined amicableness. When Harold, in his ride an hour or two afterwards, encountered his uncle shouldering a gun, and followed by one black and one liver-spotted pointer, his muscular person with its red eagle face set off by a velveteen jacket and leather leggings, Mr. Lingon's first question was, —

"Well, lad, how have you got on with Jermyn?"

"Oh, I don't think I shall like the fellow. He 's a sort of amateur gentleman. But I must make use of him. I expect whatever I get out of him will only be something short of fair pay for what he has got out of us. But I shall see."

"Ay, ay, use his gun to bring down your game, and after that beat the thief with the butt-end. That 's wisdom and justice and pleasure all in one, — talking between ourselves as uncle and nephew. But I say, Harold, I was

going to tell you, now I come to think of it, this is rather a nasty business, your calling yourself a Radical. I 've been turning it over in after-dinner speeches, but it looks awkward, — it 's not what people are used to, — it wants a good deal of Latin to make it go down. I shall be worried about it at the sessions, and I can think of nothing neat enough to carry about in my pocket by way of answer."

"Nonsense, uncle! I remember what a good speechifier you always were; you 'll never be at a loss. You only want a few more evenings to think of it."

"But you 'll not be attacking the Church and the institutions of the country, — you 'll not be going those lengths; you 'll keep up the bulwarks, and so on, eh?"

"No, I sha'n't attack the Church, only the incomes of the bishops, perhaps, to make them eke out the incomes of the poor clergy."

"Well, well, I have no objection to that. Nobody likes our Bishop: he 's all Greek and greediness; too proud to dine with his own father. You may pepper the bishops a little. But you 'll respect the Constitution handed down, etc., — and you 'll rally round the throne, — and the King, God bless him, and the usual toasts, eh?"

"Of course, of course. I 'm a Radical only in rooting out abuses."

"That 's the word I wanted, my lad!" said the Vicar, slapping Harold's knee. "That 's a spool to wind a speech on. 'Abuses' is the very word; and if anybody shows himself offended, he 'll put the cap on for himself."

"I remove the rotten timbers," said Harold, inwardly amused, "and substitute fresh oak, that's all."

"Well done, my boy! By George, you'll be a speaker! But I say, Harold, I hope you've got a little Latin left. This young Debarry is a tremendous fellow at the classics, and walks on stilts to any length. He's one of the new Conservatives. Old Sir Maximus does n't understand him at all."

"That won't do at the hustings," said Harold. "He'll get knocked off his stilts pretty quickly there."

"Bless me! it's astonishing how well you're up in the affairs of the country, my boy. But rub up a few quotations, — '*Quod turpe bonis decebat Crispinum*,'— and that sort of thing, — just to show Debarry what you could do if you liked. But you want to ride on?"

"Yes; I have an appointment at Treby. Good-by."

"He's a cleverish chap," muttered the Vicar, as Harold rode away. "When he's had plenty of English exercise, and brought out his knuckle a bit, he'll be a Lingon again as he used to be. I must go and see how Arabella takes his being a Radical. It's a little awkward; but a clergyman must keep peace in a family. Confound it! I'm not bound to love Toryism better than my own flesh and blood, and the manor I shoot over. That's a heathenish, Brutus-like sort of thing, as if Providence could n't take care of the country without my quarrelling with my own sister's son!"

CHAPTER III

'T was town, yet country too; you felt the warmth
Of clustering houses in the wintry time;
Supped with a friend, and went by lantern home.
Yet from your chamber window you could hear
The tiny bleat of new-yeaned lambs, or see
The children bend beside the hedgerow banks
To pluck the primroses.

TREBY MAGNA, on which the Reform Bill had thrust the new honour of being a polling-place, had been, at the beginning of the century, quite a typical old market-town, lying in pleasant sleepiness among green pastures, with a rush-fringed river meandering through them. Its principal street had various handsome and tall-windowed brick houses with walled gardens behind them; and at the end, where it widened into the market-place, there was the cheerful rough-stuccoed front of that excellent inn, the Marquis of Granby, where the farmers put up their gigs, not only on fair and market days, but on exceptional Sundays when they came to church. And the church was one of those fine old English structures worth travelling to see, standing in a broad churchyard with a line of solemn yew-trees beside it, and lifting a majestic tower and spire far above the red-and-purple roofs of the town. It was not large enough to hold all the parishioners of a parish which stretched over distant villages and hamlets; but then they were never so unreasonable as to wish to be all

in at once, and had never complained that the space of a large side-chapel was taken up by the tombs of the Debarrys, and shut in by a handsome iron screen. For when the black Benedictines ceased to pray and chant in this church, when the Blessed Virgin and Saint Gregory were expelled, the Debarrys, as lords of the manor, naturally came next to Providence and took the place of the saints. Long before that time, indeed, there had been a Sir Maximus Debarry who had been at the fortifying of the old castle, which now stood in ruins in the midst of the green pastures, and with its sheltering wall towards the north made an excellent straw-yard for the pigs of Wace & Co., brewers of the celebrated Treby beer. Wace & Co. did not stand alone in the town as prosperous traders on a large scale, to say nothing of those who had retired from business; and in no country town of the same small size as Treby was there a larger proportion of families who had handsome sets of china without handles, hereditary punch-bowls, and large silver ladles with a Queen Anne's guinea in the centre. Such people naturally took tea and supped together frequently; and as there was no professional man or tradesman in Treby who was not connected by business, if not by blood, with the farmers of the district, the richer sort of these were much invited, and gave invitations in their turn. They played at whist, ate and drank generously, praised Mr. Pitt and the war as keeping up prices and religion, and were very humorous about each other's property, having much the same coy pleasure in allusions to their

secret ability to purchase, as blushing lasses sometimes have in jokes about their secret preferences. The Rector was always of the Debarry family, associated only with county people, and was much respected for his affability; a clergyman who would have taken tea with the townspeople would have given a dangerous shock to the mind of a Treby Churchman.

Such was the old-fashioned, grazing, brewing, wool-packing, cheese-loading life of Treby Magna, until there befell new conditions, complicating its relation with the rest of the world, and gradually awakening in it that higher consciousness which is known to bring higher pains. First came the canal; next, the working of the coal-mines at Sproxton, two miles off the town; and thirdly, the discovery of a saline spring, which suggested to a too constructive brain the possibility of turning Treby Magna into a fashionable watering-place. So daring an idea was not originated by a native Trebian, but by a young lawyer who came from a distance, knew the dictionary by heart, and was probably an illegitimate son of somebody or other. The idea, although it promised an increase of wealth to the town, was not well received at first; ladies objected to seeing "objects" drawn about in hand-carriages, the doctor foresaw the advent of unsound practitioners, and most retail tradesmen concurred with him that new doings were usually for the advantage of new people. The more unanswerable reasoners urged that Treby had prospered without baths, and it was yet to be seen how it would prosper with them; while

a report that the proposed name for them was Bethesda Spa, threatened to give the whole affair a blasphemous aspect. Even Sir Maximus Debarry, who was to have an unprecedented return for the thousands he would lay out on a pump-room and hotel, regarded the thing as a little too new, and held back for some time. But the persuasive powers of the young lawyer, Mr. Matthew Jermyn, together with the opportune opening of a stone-quarry, triumphed at last; the handsome buildings were erected, an excellent guide-book and descriptive cards, surmounted by vignettes, were printed, and Treby Magna became conscious of certain facts in its own history of which it had previously been in contented ignorance.

But it was all in vain. The Spa, from some mysterious reason, did not succeed. Some attributed the failure to the coal-mines and the canal; others to the peace, which had had ruinous effects on the country; and others, who disliked Jermyn, to the original folly of the plan. Among these last was Sir Maximus himself, who never forgave the too persuasive attorney; it was Jermyn's fault not only that a useless hotel had been built, but that he, Sir Maximus, being straitened for money, had at last let the building, with the adjacent land lying on the river, on a long lease, on the supposition that it was to be turned into a benevolent college, and had seen himself subseqently powerless to prevent its being turned into a tape manufactory,—a bitter thing to any gentleman, and especially to the representative of one of the oldest families in England.

In this way it happened that Treby Magna gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town, — the heart of a great rural district, where the trade was only such as had close relation with the local landed interest, — and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded; and in this way it was that Trebian Dissent gradually altered its character. Formerly it had been of a quiescent, well-to-do kind, represented architecturally by a small, venerable, dark-pewed chapel, built by Presbyterians, but long occupied by a sparse congregation of Independents, who were as little moved by doctrinal zeal as their church-going neighbours, and did not feel themselves deficient in religious liberty, inasmuch as they were not hindered from occasionally slumbering in their pews, and were not obliged to go regularly to the weekly prayer-meeting. But when stone-pits and coal-pits made new hamlets that threatened to spread up to the very town, when the tape-weavers came with their news-reading inspectors and book-keepers, the Independent chapel began to be filled with eager men and women, to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence, and made them feel in secure alliance with the unseen but supreme rule of a world in which their own visible part was small. There were Dissenters in Treby now who could not be regarded by the Church people in the light of old neighbours to

whom the habit of going to chapel was an innocent, unenviable inheritance along with a particular house and garden, a tanyard, or a grocery business, — Dissenters who in their turn, without meaning to be in the least abusive, spoke of the high-bred Rector as a blind leader of the blind. And Dissent was not the only thing that the times had altered; prices had fallen, poor-rates had risen, rent and tithe were not elastic enough, and the farmer's fat sorrow had become lean: he began to speculate on causes, and to trace things back to that causeless mystery, the cessation of one-pound notes. Thus, when political agitation swept in a great current through the country, Treby Magna was prepared to vibrate. The Catholic Emancipation Bill opened the eyes of neighbours, and made them aware how very injurious they were to each other and to the welfare of mankind generally. Mr. Tiliot, the Church spirit-merchant, knew now that Mr. Nuttwood, the obliging grocer, was one of those Dissenters, Deists, Socinians, Papists, and Radicals, who were in league to destroy the Constitution. A retired old London tradesman, who was believed to understand politics, said that thinking people must wish George the Third alive again in all his early vigour of mind; and even the farmers became less materialistic in their view of causes, and referred much to the agency of the devil and the Irish Romans. The Rector, the Rev. Augustus Debarry, really a fine specimen of the old-fashioned aristocratic clergyman, preaching short sermons, understanding business, and acting liberally about his tithe, had never before

found himself in collision with Dissenters; but now he began to feel that these people were a nuisance in the parish, that his brother Sir Maximus must take care lest they should get land to build more chapels, and that it might not have been a bad thing if the law had furnished him as a magistrate with a power of putting a stop to the political sermons of the Independent preacher, which in their way were as pernicious sources of intoxication as the beer-houses. The Dissenters, on their side, were not disposed to sacrifice the cause of truth and freedom to a temporizing mildness of language; but they defended themselves from the charge of religious indifference, and solemnly disclaimed any lax expectations that Catholics were likely to be saved, — urging, on the contrary, that they were not too hopeful about Protestants who adhered to a bloated and worldly Prelacy. Thus Treby Magna, which had lived quietly through the great earthquakes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, which had remained unmoved by the "Rights of Man," and saw little in Mr. Cobbett's "Weekly Register" except that he held eccentric views about potatoes, began at last to know the higher pains of a dim political consciousness; and the development had been greatly helped by the recent agitation about the Reform Bill. Tory, Whig, and Radical did not perhaps become clearer in their definition of each other; but the names seemed to acquire so strong a stamp of honour and infamy, that definitions would only have weakened the impression. As to the short and easy method of judging

opinions by the personal character of those who held them, it was liable to be much frustrated in Treby. It so happened in that particular town that the Reformers were not all of them large-hearted patriots or ardent lovers of justice; indeed, one of them, in the very midst of the agitation, was detected in using unequal scales, —a fact to which many Tories pointed with disgust as showing plainly enough, without further argument, that the cry for a change in the representative system was hollow trickery. Again, the Tories were far from being all oppressors, disposed to grind down the working classes into serfdom; and it was undeniable that the inspector at the tape manufactory, who spoke with much eloquence on the extension of the suffrage, was a more tyrannical personage than open-handed Mr. Wace, whose chief political tenet was that it was all nonsense giving men votes when they had no stake in the country. On the other hand, there were some Tories who gave themselves a great deal of leisure to abuse hypocrites, Radicals, Dissenters, and atheism generally, but whose inflamed faces, theistic swearing, and frankness in expressing a wish to borrow, certainly did not mark them out strongly as holding opinions likely to save society.

The Reformers had triumphed; it was clear that the wheels were going whither they were pulling, and they were in fine spirits for exertion. But if they were pulling towards the country's ruin, there was the more need for others to hang on behind and get the wheels to stick if possible. In Treby, as elsewhere, people

were told they must "rally" at the coming election; but there was now a large number of waverers, — men of flexible, practical minds, who were not such bigots as to cling to any views when a good tangible reason could be urged against them; while some regarded it as the most neighbourly thing to hold a little with both sides, and were not sure that they should rally or vote at all. It seemed an invidious thing to vote for one gentleman rather than another.

These social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters, and this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life, from the time when the primeval milkmaid had to wander with the wanderings of her clan, because the cow she milked was one of a herd which had made the pastures bare. Even in that conservatory existence where the fair Camellia is sighed for by the noble young Pine-apple, neither of them needing to care about the frost or rain outside, there is a nether apparatus of hot-water pipes liable to cool down on a strike of the gardeners or a scarcity of coal. And the lives we are about to look back upon do not belong to those conservatory species; they are rooted in the common earth, having to endure all the ordinary chances of past and present weather. As to the weather of 1832, the Zadkiel of that time had predicted that the electrical condition of the clouds in the political hemisphere would produce unusual perturbations in organic existence, and he would

perhaps have seen a fulfilment of his remarkable prophecy in that mutual influence of dissimilar destinies which we shall see gradually unfolding itself. For if the mixed political conditions of Treby Magna had not been acted on by the passing of the Reform Bill, Mr. Harold Transome would not have presented himself as a candidate for North Loamshire, Treby would not have been a polling-place, Mr. Matthew Jermyn would not have been on affable terms with a Dissenting preacher and his flock, and the venerable town would not have been placarded with handbills, more or less complimentary and retrospective, — conditions in this case essential to the "where" and the "what," without which, as the learned know, there can be no event whatever.

For example, it was through these conditions that a young man named Felix Holt made a considerable difference in the life of Harold Transome, though nature and fortune seemed to have done what they could to keep the lots of the two men quite aloof from each other. Felix was heir to nothing better than a quack medicine; his mother lived up a back street in Treby Magna, and her sitting-room was ornamented with her best tea-tray and several framed testimonials to the virtues of Holt's Cathartic Lozenges and Holt's Restorative Elixir. There could hardly have been a lot less like Harold Transome's than this of the quack doctor's son, except in the superficial facts that he called himself a Radical, that he was the only son of his mother, and that he had lately returned to his home with ideas and

resolves not a little disturbing to that mother's mind.

But Mrs. Holt, unlike Mrs. Transome, was much disposed to reveal her troubles, and was not without a counsellor into whose ear she could pour them. On this 2d of September, when Mr. Harold Transome had had his first interview with Jermyn, and when the attorney went back to his office with new views of canvassing in his mind, Mrs. Holt had put on her bonnet as early as nine o'clock in the morning, and had gone to see the Rev. Rufus Lyon, minister of the Independent Chapel usually spoken of as "Malthouse Yard."

CHAPTER IV

A pious and painful preacher. — FULLER.

MR. LYON lived in a small house, not quite so good as the parish clerk's, adjoining the entry which led to the Chapel Yard. The new prosperity of Dissent at Treby had led to an enlargement of the chapel, which absorbed all extra funds and left none for the enlargement of the minister's income. He sat this morning, as usual, in a low upstairs room, called his study, which, by means of a closet capable of holding his bed, served also as a sleeping-room. The book-shelves did not suffice for his store of old books, which lay about him in piles so arranged as to leave narrow lanes between them; for the minister was much given to walking about during his hours of meditation, and very narrow passages would serve for his small legs, unencumbered by any other drapery than his black silk stockings and the flexible though prominent bows of black ribbon that tied his knee-breeches. He was walking about now, with his hands clasped behind him, — an attitude in which his body seemed to bear about the same proportion to his head as the lower part of a stone Hermes bears to the carven image that crowns it. His face looked old and worn, yet the curtain of hair that fell from his bald crown and hung about his neck retained much of its original auburn tint, and his large, brown,

short-sighted eyes were still clear and bright. At the first glance every one thought him a very odd-looking, rusty old man; the free-school boys often hooted after him, and called him "Revelations;" and to many respectable Church people old Lyon's little legs and large head seemed to make Dissent additionally preposterous. But he was too short-sighted to notice those who tittered at him, — too absent from the world of small facts and petty impulses in which titterers live. With Satan to argue against on matters of vital experience as well as of church government, with great texts to meditate on, which seemed to get deeper as he tried to fathom them, it had never occurred to him to reflect what sort of image his small person made on the retina of a light-minded beholder. The good Rufus had his ire and his egoism; but they existed only as the red heat which gave force to his belief and his teaching. He was susceptible concerning the true office of deacons in the primitive Church, and his small nervous body was jarred from head to foot by the concussion of an argument to which he saw no answer. In fact, the only moments when he could be said to be really conscious of his body were when he trembled under the pressure of some agitating thought.

He was meditating on the text for his Sunday morning sermon, "And all the people said, Amen," — a mere mustard-seed of a text, which had split at first only into two divisions, "What was said," and "Who said it;" but these were growing into a many-branched discourse, and the preacher's eyes dilated, and a smile played

about his mouth till, as his manner was, when he felt happily inspired, he had begun to utter his thoughts aloud in the varied measure and cadence habitual to him, changing from a rapid but distinct undertone to a loud, emphatic *rallentando.*

"My brethren, do you think that great shout was raised in Israel by each man's waiting to say amen till his neighbours had said amen? Do you think there will ever be a great shout for the right — the shout of a nation as of one man, rounded and whole, like the voice of the archangel that bound together all the listeners of earth and heaven — if every Christian of you peeps round to see what his neighbours in good coats are doing, or else puts his hat before his face that he may shout and never be heard? But this is what you do: when the servant of God stands up to deliver his message, do you lay your souls beneath the Word as you set out your plants beneath the falling rain? No; one of you sends his eyes to all corners, he smothers his soul with small questions, 'What does brother Y. think?' 'Is this doctrine high enough for brother Z.?' 'Will the church members be pleased?' And another —"

Here the door was opened; and old Lyddy, the minister's servant, put in her head to say, in a tone of despondency, finishing with a groan, "Here is Mrs. Holt wanting to speak to you; she says she comes out of season, but she's in trouble."

"Lyddy," said Mr. Lyon, falling at once into a quiet conversational tone, "if you are wrestling with the enemy, let me refer you to Ezekiel

the thirteenth and twenty-second, and beg of you not to groan. It is a stumbling-block and offence to my daughter; she would take no broth yesterday, because she said you had cried into it. Thus you cause the truth to be lightly spoken of, and make the enemy rejoice. If your face-ache gives him an advantage, take a little warm ale with your meat, — I do not grudge the money."

"If I thought my drinking warm ale would hinder poor dear Miss Esther from speaking light, — but she hates the smell of it."

"Answer not again, Lyddy, but send up Mistress Holt to me."

Lyddy closed the door immediately.

"I lack grace to deal with these weak sisters," said the minister, again thinking aloud, and walking. "Their needs lie too much out of the track of my meditations, and take me often unawares. Mistress Holt is another who darkens counsel by words without knowledge, and angers the reason of the natural man. Lord, give me patience. My sins were heavier to bear than this woman's folly. Come in, Mrs. Holt, — come in."

He hastened to disencumber a chair of Matthew Henry's Commentary, and begged his visitor to be seated. She was a tall elderly woman, dressed in black, with a light-brown front and a black band over her forehead. She moved the chair a little, and seated herself in it with some emphasis, looking fixedly at the opposite wall with a hurt and argumentative expression. Mr. Lyon had placed himself in the chair against his desk, and waited with the resolute resignation

of a patient who is about to undergo an operation. But his visitor did not speak.

"You have something on your mind, Mrs. Holt?" he said, at last.

"Indeed I have, sir, else I should n't be here."

"Speak freely."

"It 's well known to you, Mr. Lyon, that my husband, Mr. Holt, came from the north, and was a member in Malthouse Yard long before *you* began to be pastor of it, which was seven year ago last Michaelmas. It 's the truth, Mr. Lyon, and I 'm not that woman to sit here and say it if it was n't true."

"Certainly, it is true."

"And if my husband had been alive when you 'd come to preach upon trial, he 'd have been as good a judge of your gifts as Mr. Nuttwood or Mr. Muscat, though whether he 'd have agreed with some that your doctrine was n't high enough, I can't say. For myself, I 've my opinion about high doctrine."

"Was it my preaching you came to speak about?" said the minister, hurrying in the question.

"No, Mr. Lyon, I 'm not that woman. But this I *will* say, for my husband died before your time, that he had a wonderful gift in prayer, as the old members well know, if anybody likes to ask 'em, not believing my words; and he believed himself that the receipt for the Cancer Cure, which I 've sent out in bottles till this very last April before September as now is, and have bottles standing by me, — he believed it was sent to him in answer to prayer; and nobody can deny it, for he prayed most

regular, and read out of the green baize Bible."

Mrs. Holt paused, appearing to think that Mr. Lyon had been successfully confuted, and should show himself convinced.

"Has any one been aspersing your husband's character?" said Mr. Lyon, with a slight initiative towards that relief of groaning for which he had reproved Lyddy.

"Sir, they dared n't. For though he was a man of prayer, he did n't want skill and knowledge to find things out for himself; and that was what I used to say to *my* friends when they wondered at my marrying a man from Lancashire, with no trade nor fortune but what he 'd got in his head. But my husband's tongue 'ud have been a fortune to anybody, and there was many a one said it was as good as a dose of physic to hear him talk; not but what that got him into trouble in Lancashire, but he always said, if the worst came to the worst, he could go and preach to the blacks. But he did better than that, Mr. Lyon, for he married me; and this I *will* say, that for age and conduct and managing —"

"Mistress Holt," interrupted the minister, "these are not the things whereby we may edify one another. Let me beg of you to be as brief as you can. My time is not my own."

"Well, Mr. Lyon, I 've a right to speak to my own character; and I 'm one of your congregation, though I 'm not a church member, for I was born in the General Baptist connection: and as for being saved without works, there 's a many, I dare say, can't do without that doctrine; but

I thank the Lord I never needed to put *my*self on a level with the thief on the cross. I 've done *my* duty, and more, if anybody comes to that; for I 've gone without my bit of meat to make broth for a sick neighbour; and if there 's any of the church members say they 've done the same, I 'd ask them if they had the sinking at the stomach as I have; for I 've ever strove to do the right thing, and more, for good-natured I always was; and I little thought, after being respected by everybody, I should come to be reproached by my own son. And my husband said, when he was a-dying, — 'Mary,' he said, 'the Elixir and the Pills and the Cure will support you, for they 've a great name in all the country round, and you 'll pray for a blessing on them.' And so I have done, Mr. Lyon; and to say they 're not good medicines, when they 've been taken for fifty miles round by high and low and rich and poor, and nobody speaking against 'em but Dr. Lukin, it seems to me it 's a-flying in the face of Heaven; for if it was wrong to take the medicines, could n't the blessed Lord have stopped it?"

Mrs. Holt was not given to tears; she was much sustained by conscious unimpeachableness, and by an argumentative tendency which usually checks the too great activity of the lachrymal gland; nevertheless her eyes had become moist, her fingers played on her knee in an agitated manner, and she finally plucked a bit of her gown and held it with great nicety between her thumb and finger. Mr. Lyon, however, by listening attentively, had begun partly to divine the source of her trouble.

"Am I wrong in gathering from what you say, Mistress Holt, that your son has objected in some way to your sale of your late husband's medicines?"

"Mr. Lyon, he 's masterful beyond everything, and he talks more than his father did. I 've got my reason, Mr. Lyon, and if anybody talks sense I can follow him; but Felix talks so wild, and contradicts his mother. And what do you think he says, after giving up his 'prenticeship, and going off to study at Glasgow, and getting through all the bit of money his father saved for his bringing-up, — what has all his learning come to? He says I 'd better never open my Bible, for it 's as bad poison to me as the pills are to half the people as swallow 'em. You 'll not speak of this again, Mr. Lyon, — I don't think ill enough of you to believe *that*. For I suppose a Christian can understand the word o' God without going to Glasgow, and there 's texts upon texts about ointment and medicine, and there 's one as might have been made for a receipt of my husband's — it 's just as if it was a riddle, and Holt's Elixir was the answer."

"Your son uses rash words, Mistress Holt," said the minister, "but it is quite true that we may err in giving a too private interpretation to the Scripture. The word of God has to satisfy the larger needs of his people, like the rain and the sunshine, — which no man must think to be meant for his own patch of seed-ground solely. Will it not be well that I should see your son, and talk with him on these matters? He was at chapel, I observed, and I suppose I am to be his pastor."

"That was what I wanted to ask you, Mr. Lyon. For perhaps he 'll listen to you, and not talk you down as he does his poor mother. For after we 'd been to chapel, he spoke better of you than he does of most; he said you was a fine old fellow, and an old-fashioned Puritan, — he uses dreadful language, Mr. Lyon; but I saw he did n't mean you ill, for all that. He calls most folks' religion rottenness; and yet another time he 'll tell me I ought to feel myself a sinner, and do God's will and not my own. But it 's my belief he says first one thing and then another only to abuse his mother. Or else he 's going off his head, and must be sent to a 'sylum. But if he writes to the 'North Loamshire Herald' first, to tell everybody the medicines are good for nothing, how can I ever keep him and myself?"

"Tell him I shall feel favoured if he will come and see me this evening," said Mr. Lyon, not without a little prejudice in favour of the young man, whose language about the preacher in Malthouse Yard did not seem to him to be altogether dreadful. "Meanwhile, my friend, I counsel you to send up a supplication, which I shall not fail to offer also, that you may receive a spirit of humility and submission, so that you may not be hindered from seeing and following the Divine guidance in this matter by any false lights of pride and obstinacy. Of this more when I have spoken with your son."

"I 'm not proud or obstinate, Mr. Lyon. I never did say I was everything that was bad, and I never will. And why this trouble should be sent on me above everybody else, — for I

have n't told you all. He 's made himself a journeyman to Mr. Prowd the watchmaker, — after all this learning, — and he says he 'll go with patches on his knees, and he shall like himself the better. And as for his having little boys to teach, they 'll come in all weathers with dirty shoes. If it 's madness, Mr. Lyon, it 's no use your talking to him."

"We shall see. Perhaps it may even be the disguised working of grace within him. We must not judge rashly. Many eminent servants of God have been led by ways as strange."

"Then I 'm sorry for their mothers, that 's all, Mr. Lyon ; and all the more if they 'd been well-spoken-on women. For not my biggest enemy, whether it 's he or she, if they 'll speak the truth, can turn round and say I 've deserved this trouble. And when everybody gets their due, and people's doings are spoken of on the house-tops, as the Bible says they will be, it 'll be known what I 've gone through with those medicines, — the pounding and the pouring, and the letting stand, and the weighing, — up early and down late, — there 's nobody knows yet but One that 's worthy to know ; and the pasting o' the printed labels right side upwards. There 's few women would have gone through with it ; and it 's reasonable to think it 'll be made up to me ; for if there 's promised and purchased blessings, I should think this trouble is purchasing 'em. For if my son Felix does n't have a strait-waistcoat put on him, he 'll have his way. But I say no more. I wish you good-morning, Mr. Lyon, and thank you, though I well know it 's your duty to act as you 're doing. And I never trou-

bled you about my own soul, as some do who look down on me for not being a church member."

"Farewell, Mistress Holt, farewell. I pray that a more powerful teacher than I am may instruct you."

The door was closed, and the much-tried Rufus walked about again, saying aloud, groaningly, —

"This woman has sat under the Gospel all her life, and she is as blind as a heathen, and as proud and stiff-necked as a Pharisee; yet she is one of the souls I watch for. 'T is true that even Sara, the chosen mother of God's people, showed a spirit of unbelief, and perhaps of selfish anger; and it is a passage that bears the unmistakable signet, 'doing honour to the wife or woman, as unto the weaker vessel.' For therein is the greatest check put on the ready scorn of the natural man."

CHAPTER V

1st Citizen. Sir, there's a hurry in the veins of youth,
That makes a vice of virtue by excess.
2d Citizen. What if the coolness of our tardier veins
Be loss of virtue?
1st Citizen. All things cool with time, —
The sun itself, they say, till heat shall find
A general level, nowhere in excess.
2d Citizen. 'T is a poor climax, to my weaker thought,
That future middlingness.

IN the evening, when Mr. Lyon was expecting the knock at the door that would announce Felix Holt, he occupied his cushionless arm-chair in the sitting-room, and was skimming rapidly, in his short-sighted way, by the light of one candle, the pages of a missionary report, emitting occasionally a slight "H'm-m," that appeared to be expressive of criticism rather than of approbation. The room was dismally furnished, the only objects indicating an intention of ornament being a bookcase, a map of the Holy Land, an engraved portrait of Dr. Doddridge, and a black bust with a coloured face, which for some reason or other was covered with green gauze. Yet any one whose attention was quite awake must have been aware, even on entering, of certain things that were incongruous with the general air of sombreness and privation. There was a delicate scent of dried rose-leaves ; the light by which the minister was reading was a wax-candle in a white earthenware candlestick, and the table on

the opposite side of the fireplace held a dainty work-basket frilled with blue satin.

Felix Holt, when he entered, was not in an observant mood; and when, after seating himself, at the minister's invitation, near the little table which held the work-basket, he stared at the wax-candle opposite to him, he did so without any wonder or consciousness that the candle was not of tallow. But the minister's sensitiveness gave another interpretation to the gaze which he divined rather than saw; and in alarm lest this inconsistent extravagance should obstruct his usefulness, he hastened to say, —

"You are doubtless amazed to see me with a wax-light, my young friend; but this undue luxury is paid for with the earnings of my daughter, who is so delicately framed that the smell of tallow is loathsome to her."

"I heeded not the candle, sir. I thank Heaven I am not a mouse to have a nose that takes note of wax or tallow."

The loud, abrupt tones made the old man vibrate a little. He had been stroking his chin gently before, with a sense that he must be very quiet and deliberate in his treatment of the eccentric young man; but now, quite unreflectingly, he drew forth a pair of spectacles, which he was in the habit of using when he wanted to observe his interlocutor more closely than usual.

"And I myself, in fact, am equally indifferent," he said, as he opened and adjusted his glasses, "so that I have a sufficient light on my book." Here his large eyes looked discerningly through the spectacles.

"'T is the quality of the page you care about, not of the candle," said Felix, smiling pleasantly enough at his inspector. "You 're thinking that you have a roughly written page before you now."

That was true. The minister, accustomed to the respectable air of provincial townsmen, and especially to the sleek well-clipped gravity of his own male congregation, felt a slight shock as his glasses made perfectly clear to him the shaggy-headed, large-eyed, strong-limbed person of this questionable young man, without waistcoat or cravat. But the possibility, supported by some of Mrs. Holt's words, that a disguised work of grace might be going forward in the son of whom she complained so bitterly, checked any hasty interpretations.

"I abstain from judging by the outward appearance only," he answered, with his usual simplicity. "I myself have experienced that when the spirit is much exercised it is difficult to remember neckbands and strings and such small accidents of our vesture, which are nevertheless decent and needful so long as we sojourn in the flesh. And you, too, my young friend, as I gather from your mother's troubled and confused report, are undergoing some travail of mind. You will not, I trust, object to open yourself fully to me, as to an aged pastor who has himself had much inward wrestling, and has especially known much temptation from doubt."

"As to doubt," said Felix, loudly and brusquely as before, "if it is those absurd medicines and gulling advertisements that my mother has been

talking of to you, — and I suppose it is, — I 've no more doubt about *them* than I have about pocket-picking. I know there 's a stage of speculation in which a man may doubt whether a pickpocket is blameworthy, — but I 'm not one of your subtle fellows who keep looking at the world through their own legs. If I allowed the sale of those medicines to go on, and my mother to live out of the proceeds when I can keep her by the honest labour of my hands, I 've not the least doubt that I should be a rascal."

"I would fain inquire more particularly into your objection to these medicines," said Mr. Lyon, gravely. Notwithstanding his conscientiousness and a certain originality in his own mental disposition, he was too little used to high principle quite dissociated from sectarian phraseology to be as immediately in sympathy with it as he would otherwise have been. "I know they have been well reported of, and many wise persons have tried remedies providentially discovered by those who are not regular physicians, and have found a blessing in the use of them. I may mention the eminent Mr. Wesley, who, though I hold not altogether with his Arminian doctrine, nor with the usages of his institution, was nevertheless a man of God; and the journals of various Christians whose names have left a sweet savour might be cited in the same sense. Moreover, your father, who originally concocted these medicines and left them as a provision for your mother, was, as I understand, a man whose walk was not unfaithful."

"My father was ignorant," said Felix, bluntly.

"He knew neither the complication of the human system, nor the way in which drugs counteract each other. Ignorance is not so damnable as humbug, but when it prescribes pills it may happen to do more harm. I know something about these things. I was 'prentice for five miserable years to a stupid brute of a country apothecary, — my poor father left money for that, — he thought nothing could be finer for me. No matter: I know that the Cathartic Pills are a drastic compound which may be as bad as poison to half the people who swallow them; that the Elixir is an absurd farrago of a dozen incompatible things; and that the Cancer Cure might as well be bottled ditch-water."

Mr. Lyon rose and walked up and down the room. His simplicity was strongly mixed with sagacity as well as sectarian prejudice, and he did not rely at once on a loud-spoken integrity, — Satan might have flavoured it with ostentation. Presently he asked, in a rapid, low tone, "How long have you known this, young man?"

"Well put, sir," said Felix. "I 've known it a good deal longer than I have acted upon it, like plenty of other things. But you believe in conversion?"

"Yea, verily."

"So do I. I was converted by six weeks' debauchery."

The minister started. "Young man," he said, solemnly, going up close to Felix and laying a hand on his shoulder, "speak not lightly of the Divine operations, and restrain unseemly words."

"I 'm not speaking lightly," said Felix. "If

I had not seen that I was making a hog of myself very fast, and that pig-wash, even if I could have got plenty of it, was a poor sort of thing, I should never have looked life fairly in the face to see what was to be done with it. I laughed out loud at last to think of a poor devil like me, in a Scotch garret, with my stockings out at heel and a shilling or two to be dissipated upon, with a smell of raw haggis mounting from below, and old women breathing gin as they passed me on the stairs, — wanting to turn my life into easy pleasure. Then I began to see what else it could be turned into. Not much, perhaps. This world is not a very fine place for a good many of the people in it. But I 've made up my mind it sha'n't be the worse for me, if I can help it. They may tell me I can't alter the world, — that there must be a certain number of sneaks and robbers in it, and if I don't lie and filch somebody else will. Well, then, somebody else shall, for I won't. That 's the upshot of my conversion, Mr. Lyon, if you want to know it."

Mr. Lyon removed his hand from Felix's shoulder and walked about again. "Did you sit under any preacher at Glasgow, young man?"

"No; I heard most of the preachers once, but I never wanted to hear them twice."

The good Rufus was not without a slight rising of resentment at this young man's want of reverence. It was not yet plain whether he wanted to hear twice the preacher in Malthouse Yard. But the resentful feeling was carefully repressed; a soul in so peculiar a condition must be dealt with delicately.

"And now, may I ask," he said, "what course

you mean to take, after hindering your mother from making and selling these drugs? I speak no more in their favour after what you have said. God forbid that I should strive to hinder you from seeking whatsoever things are honest and honourable. But your mother is advanced in years; she needs comfortable sustenance; you have doubtless considered how you may make her amends? 'He that provideth not for his own —' I trust you respect the authority that so speaks. And I will not suppose that, after being tender of conscience towards strangers, you will be careless towards your mother. There be indeed some who, taking a mighty charge on their shoulders, must perforce leave their households to Providence, and to the care of humbler brethren, but in such a case the call must be clear."

"I shall keep my mother as well, nay, better than she has kept herself. She has always been frugal. With my watch and clock cleaning, and teaching one or two little chaps that I 've got to come to me, I can earn enough. As for me, I can live on bran porridge. I have the stomach of a rhinoceros."

"But for a young man so well furnished as you, who can questionless write a good hand and keep books, were it not well to seek some higher situation as clerk or assistant? I could speak to Brother Muscat, who is well acquainted with all such openings. Any place in Pendrell's Bank, I fear, is now closed against such as are not Churchmen. It used not to be so; but a year ago he discharged Brother Bodkin, although he was a valuable servant. Still, something might

be found. There are ranks and degrees; and those who can serve in the higher must not unadvisedly change what seems to be a providential appointment. Your poor mother is not altogether — "

"Excuse me, Mr. Lyon; I 've had all that out with my mother, and I may as well save you any trouble by telling you that my mind has been made up about that a long while ago. I 'll take no employment that obliges me to prop up my chin with a high cravat, and wear straps, and pass the livelong day with a set of fellows who spend their spare money on shirt-pins. That sort of work is really lower than many handicrafts; it only happens to be paid out of proportion. That 's why I set myself to learn the watchmaking trade. My father was a weaver first of all. It would have been better for him if he had remained a weaver. I came home through Lancashire, and saw an uncle of mine who is a weaver still. I mean to stick to the class I belong to, — people who don't follow the fashions."

Mr. Lyon was silent a few moments. This dialogue was far from plain sailing; he was not certain of his latitude and longitude. If the despiser of Glasgow preachers had been arguing in favour of gin and Sabbath-breaking, Mr. Lyon's course would have been clearer. "Well, well," he said deliberately, "it is true that Saint Paul exercised the trade of tent-making, though he was learned in all the wisdom of the Rabbis."

"Saint Paul was a wise man," said Felix. "Why should I want to get into the middle class because I have some learning? The most

of the middle class are as ignorant as the working people about everything that does n't belong to their own Brummagem life. That 's how the working men are left to foolish devices, and keep worsening themselves; the best heads among them forsake their born comrades, and go in for a house with a high door-step and a brass knocker."

Mr. Lyon stroked his mouth and chin, perhaps because he felt some disposition to smile; and it would not be well to smile too readily at what seemed but a weedy resemblance of Christian unworldliness. On the contrary, there might be a dangerous snare in an unsanctified outstepping of average Christian practice.

"Nevertheless," he observed gravely, "it is by such self-advancement that many have been enabled to do good service to the cause of liberty and to the public well-being. The ring and the robe of Joseph were no objects for a good man's ambition; but they were the signs of that credit which he won by his divinely inspired skill, and which enabled him to act as a saviour to his brethren."

"Oh, yes, your ringed and scented men of the people! — I won't be one of them. Let a man once throttle himself with a satin stock, and he 'll get new wants and new motives. Metamorphosis will have begun at his neck-joint, and it will go on till it has changed his likings first and then his reasoning, which will follow his likings as the feet of a hungry dog follow his nose. I 'll have none of your clerkly gentility. I might end by collecting greasy pence from poor men to buy myself a fine coat and a glut-

ton's dinner, on pretence of serving the poor men. I 'd sooner be Paley's fat pigeon than a demagogue all tongue and stomach, though" — here Felix changed his voice a little — "I should like well enough to be another sort of demagogue, if I could."

"Then you have a strong interest in the great political movements of these times?" said Mr. Lyon, with a perceptible flashing of the eyes.

"I should think so. I despise every man who has not, — or, having it, does n't try to rouse it in other men."

"Right, my young friend, right," said the minister, in a deep, cordial tone. Inevitably his mind was drawn aside from the immediate consideration of Felix Holt's spiritual interest by the prospect of political sympathy. In those days so many instruments of God's cause in the fight for religious and political liberty held creeds that were painfully wrong, and, indeed, irreconcilable with salvation! "That is my own view, which I maintain in the face of some opposition from brethren who contend that a share in public movements is a hindrance to the closer walk, and that the pulpit is no place for teaching men their duties as members of the commonwealth. I have had much puerile blame cast upon me because I have uttered such names as Brougham and Wellington in the pulpit. Why not Wellington as well as Rabshakeh? and why not Brougham as well as Balaam? Does God know less of men than he did in the days of Hezekiah and Moses? Is his arm shortened, and is the world become too wide

for his providence? But, they say, there are no politics in the New Testament — "

"Well, they 're right enough there," said Felix, with his usual unceremoniousness.

"What! you are of those who hold that a Christian minister should not meddle with public matters in the pulpit?" said Mr. Lyon, colouring. "I am ready to join issue on that point."

"Not I, sir," said Felix; "I should say, teach any truth you can, whether it 's in the Testament or out of it. It 's little enough anybody can get hold of, and still less what he can drive into the skulls of a pence-counting, parcel-tying generation, such as mostly fill your chapels."

"Young man," said Mr. Lyon, pausing in front of Felix, — he spoke rapidly, as he always did, except when his words were specially weighted with emotion; he overflowed with matter, and in his mind matter was always completely organized into words, — "I speak not on my own behalf, for not only have I no desire that any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, but I am aware of much that should make me patient under a disesteem resting even on too hasty a construction. I speak not as claiming reverence for my own age and office, — not to shame you, but to warn you. It is good that you should use plainness of speech, and I am not of those who would enforce a submissive silence on the young, that they themselves, being elders, may be heard at large; for Elihu was the youngest of Job's friends, yet was there a wise rebuke in his words; and the aged Eli was taught by a revelation to the boy Samuel. I have to keep a special watch

over myself in this matter, inasmuch as I have a need of utterance which makes the thought within me seem as a pent-up fire, until I have shot it forth, as it were, in arrowy words, each one hitting its mark. Therefore I pray for a listening spirit, which is a great mark of grace. Nevertheless, my young friend, I am bound, as I said, to warn you. The temptations that most beset those who have great natural gifts, and are wise after the flesh, are pride and scorn, more particularly towards those weak things of the world which have been chosen to confound the things which are mighty. The scornful nostril and the high head gather not the odours that lie on the track of truth. The mind that is too ready at contempt and reprobation is — "

Here the door opened, and Mr. Lyon paused to look round; but seeing only Lyddy with the tea-tray, he went on, —

" Is, I may say, as a clenched fist that can give blows, but is shut up from receiving and holding aught that is precious, — though it were heaven-sent manna."

" I understand you, sir," said Felix, good-humouredly, putting out his hand to the little man, who had come close to him as he delivered the last sentence with sudden emphasis and slowness. " But I 'm not inclined to clench my fist at you."

" Well, well," said Mr. Lyon, shaking the proffered hand, " we shall see more of each other, and I trust shall have much profitable communing. You will stay and have a dish of tea with us: we take the meal late on Thursdays, because my daughter is detained by giving a lesson in the

French tongue. But she is doubtless returned now, and will presently come and pour out tea for us."

"Thank you, I 'll stay," said Felix, not from any curiosity to see the minister's daughter, but from a liking for the society of the minister himself, — for his quaint looks and ways, and the transparency of his talk, which gave a charm even to his weaknesses. The daughter was probably some prim Miss, neat, sensible, pious, but all in a small feminine way, in which Felix was no more interested than in Dorcas meetings, biographies of devout women, and that amount of ornamental knitting which was not inconsistent with Nonconforming seriousness.

"I 'm perhaps a little too fond of banging and smashing," he went on; "a phrenologist at Glasgow told me I had large veneration; another man there, who knew me, laughed out, and said I was the most blasphemous iconoclast living. 'That,' says my phrenologist, 'is because of his large Ideality, which prevents him from finding anything perfect enough to be venerated.' Of course I put my ears down and wagged my tail at that stroking."

"Yes, yes; I have had my own head explored with somewhat similar results. It is, I fear, but a vain show of fulfilling the heathen precept, 'Know thyself,' and too often leads to a self-estimate which will subsist in the absence of that fruit by which alone the quality of the tree is made evident. Nevertheless — Esther, my dear, this is Mr. Holt, whose acquaintance I have even now been making with more than ordinary interest. He will take tea with us."

Esther bowed slightly as she walked across the room to fetch the candle and place it near her tray. Felix rose and bowed, also with an air of indifference, which was perhaps exaggerated by the fact that he was inwardly surprised. The minister's daughter was not the sort of person he expected. She was quite incongruous with his notion of ministers' daughters in general; and though he had expected something nowise delightful, the incongruity repelled him. A very delicate scent, the faint suggestion of a garden, was wafted as she went. He would not observe her, but he had a sense of an elastic walk, the tread of small feet, a long neck and a high crown of shining brown plaits with curls that floated backward, — things, in short, that suggested a fine lady to him, and determined him to notice her as little as possible. A fine lady was always a sort of spun-glass affair, — not natural, and with no beauty for him as art; but a fine lady as the daughter of this rusty old Puritan was especially offensive.

"Nevertheless," continued Mr. Lyon, who rarely let drop any thread of discourse, "that phrenological science is not irreconcilable with the revealed dispensations. And it is undeniable that we have our varying native dispositions which even grace will not obliterate. I myself, from my youth up, have been given to question too curiously concerning the truth, — to examine and sift the medicine of the soul rather than to apply it."

"If your truth happens to be such medicine as Holt's Pills and Elixir, the less you swallow of it the better," said Felix. "But truth-

vendors and medicine-vendors usually recommend swallowing. When a man sees his livelihood in a pill or a proposition, he likes to have orders for the dose, and not curious inquiries."

This speech verged on rudeness, but it was delivered with a brusque openness that implied the absence of any personal intention. The minister's daughter was now for the first time startled into looking at Felix. But her survey of this unusual speaker was soon made, and she relieved her father from the need to reply by saying, —

"The tea is poured out, father."

That was the signal for Mr. Lyon to advance towards the table, raise his right hand, and ask a blessing at sufficient length for Esther to glance at the visitor again. There seemed to be no danger of his looking at her; he was observing her father. She had time to remark that he was a peculiar-looking person, but not insignificant, which was the quality that most hopelessly consigned a man to perdition. He was massively built. The striking points in his face were large clear gray eyes and full lips.

"Will you draw up to the table, Mr. Holt?" said the minister.

In the act of rising, Felix pushed back his chair too suddenly against the rickety table close by him; and down went the blue-frilled work-basket, flying open, and dispersing on the floor reels, thimble, muslin-work, a small sealed bottle of attar of rose, and something heavier than these, — a duodecimo volume which fell close to him between the table and the fender.

"O my stars!" said Felix, "I beg your par-

don." Esther had already started up, and with wonderful quickness had picked up half the small rolling things while Felix was lifting the basket and the book. This last had opened, and had its leaves crushed in falling; and, with the instinct of a bookish man, he saw nothing more pressing to be done than to flatten the corners of the leaves.

"Byron's Poems!" he said, in a tone of disgust, while Esther was recovering all the other articles. "'The Dream,' — he 'd better have been asleep and snoring. What! do you stuff your memory with Byron, Miss Lyon?"

Felix, on his side, was led at last to look straight at Esther, but it was with a strong denunciatory and pedagogic intention. Of course he saw more clearly than ever that she was a fine lady.

She reddened, drew up her long neck, and said, as she retreated to her chair again, —

"I have a great admiration for Byron."

Mr. Lyon had paused in the act of drawing his chair to the tea-table, and was looking on at this scene, wrinkling the corners of his eyes with a perplexed smile. Esther would not have wished him to know anything about the volume of Byron, but she was too proud to show any concern.

"He is a worldly and vain writer, I fear," said Mr. Lyon. He knew scarcely anything of the poet, whose books embodied the faith and ritual of many young ladies and gentlemen.

"A misanthropic debauchee," said Felix, lifting a chair with one hand, and holding the book open in the other, "whose notion of a hero was

that he should disorder his stomach and despise mankind. His corsairs and renegades, his Alps and Manfreds, are the most paltry puppets that were ever pulled by the strings of lust and pride."

"Hand the book to me," said Mr. Lyon.

"Let me beg of you to put it aside till after tea, father," said Esther. "However objectionable Mr. Holt may find its pages, they would certainly be made worse by being greased with bread-and-butter."

"That is true, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, laying down the book on the small table behind him. He saw that his daughter was angry.

"Ho, ho!" thought Felix, "her father is frightened at her. How came he to have such a nice-stepping, long-necked peacock for his daughter? but she shall see that I am not frightened." Then he said aloud, "I should like to know how you will justify your admiration for such a writer, Miss Lyon."

"I should not attempt it with you, Mr. Holt," said Esther. "You have such strong words at command, that they make the smallest argument seem formidable. If I had ever met the giant Cormoran, I should have made a point of agreeing with him in his literary opinions."

Esther had that excellent thing in woman, — a soft voice, with a clear, fluent utterance. Her sauciness was always charming, because it was without emphasis, and was accompanied with graceful little turns of the head.

Felix laughed at her thrust with young heartiness.

"My daughter is a critic of words, Mr. Holt,"

said the minister, smiling complacently, "and often corrects mine on the ground of niceties, which I profess are as dark to me as if they were the reports of a sixth sense which I possess not. I am an eager seeker for precision, and would fain find language subtle enough to follow the utmost intricacies of the soul's pathways, but I see not why a round word that means some object, made and blessed by the Creator, should be branded and banished as a malefactor."

"Oh, your niceties, — I know what they are," said Felix, in his usual *fortissimo*. "They all go on your system of make-believe. 'Rottenness' may suggest what is unpleasant, so you 'd better say 'sugar-plums,' or something else such a long way off the fact that nobody is obliged to think of it. Those are your roundabout euphuisms that dress up swindling till it looks as well as honesty, and shoot with boiled pease instead of bullets. I hate your gentlemanly speakers."

"Then you would not like Mr. Jermyn, I think," said Esther. "That reminds me, father, that to-day, when I was giving Miss Louisa Jermyn her lesson, Mr. Jermyn came in and spoke to me with grand politeness, and asked me at what times you were likely to be disengaged, because he wished to make your better acquaintance, and consult you on matters of importance. He never took the least notice of me before. Can you guess the reason of his sudden ceremoniousness?"

"Nay, child," said the minister, ponderingly.

"Politics, of course," said Felix. "He 's on some committee. An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a

sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry. Eh, Mr. Lyon? Is n't that it?"

"Nay, not so. He is the close ally of the Transome family, who are blind hereditary Tories like the Debarrys, and will drive their tenants to the poll as if they were sheep. And it has even been hinted that the heir who is coming from the East may be another Tory candidate, and coalesce with the younger Debarry. It is said that he has enormous wealth, and could purchase every vote in the county that has a price."

"He is come," said Esther. "I heard Miss Jermyn tell her sister that she had seen him going out of her father's room."

"'T is strange," said Mr. Lyon.

"Something extraordinary must have happened," said Esther, "for Mr. Jermyn to intend courting us. Miss Jermyn said to me only the other day that she could not think how I came to be so well educated and ladylike. She always thought Dissenters were ignorant, vulgar people. I said, So they were, usually, and Church people also in small towns. She considers herself a judge of what is ladylike, and she is vulgarity personified, — with large feet, and the most odious scent on her handkerchief, and a bonnet that looks like 'The Fashion' printed in capital letters."

"One sort of fine ladyism is as good as another," said Felix.

"No, indeed. Pardon me," said Esther. "A real fine lady does not wear clothes that flare in people's eyes, or use importunate scents, or make a noise as she moves; she is something refined and graceful and charming, and never obtrusive."

"Oh, yes," said Felix, contemptuously. "And she reads Byron also, and admires Childe Harold, — gentlemen of unspeakable woes, who employ a hairdresser and look seriously at themselves in the glass."

Esther reddened, and gave a little toss. Felix went on triumphantly. "A fine lady is a squirrel-headed thing, with small airs and small notions, about as applicable to the business of life as a pair of tweezers to the clearing of a forest. Ask your father what those old persecuted emigrant Puritans would have done with fine-lady wives and daughters."

"Oh, there is no danger of such misalliances," said Esther. "Men who are unpleasant companions and make frights of themselves, are sure to get wives tasteless enough to suit them."

"Esther, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, "let not your playfulness betray you into disrespect towards those venerable pilgrims. They struggled and endured in order to cherish and plant anew the seeds of scriptural doctrine and of a pure discipline."

"Yes, I know," said Esther, hastily, dreading a discourse on the pilgrim fathers.

"Oh, they were an ugly lot!" Felix burst in, making Mr. Lyon start. "Miss Medora would n't have minded if they had all been put into the pillory and lost their ears. She would have said, 'Their ears did stick out so.' I should n't wonder if that 's a bust of one of them." Here Felix, with sudden keenness of observation, nodded at the black bust with the gauze over its coloured face.

"No," said Mr. Lyon; "that is the eminent

George Whitfield, who, you well know, had a gift of oratory as of one on whom the tongue of flame had rested visibly. But Providence — doubtless for wise ends in relation to the inner man, for I would not inquire too closely into minutiæ which carry too many plausible interpretations for any one of them to be stable — Providence, I say, ordained that the good man should squint; and my daughter has not yet learned to bear with this infirmity."

"So she has put a veil over it. Suppose you had squinted yourself?" said Felix, looking at Esther.

"Then doubtless you could have been more polite to me, Mr. Holt," said Esther, rising and placing herself at her work-table. "You seem to prefer what is unusual and ugly."

"A peacock!" thought Felix. "I should like to come and scold her every day, and make her cry and cut her fine hair off."

Felix rose to go, and said, "I will not take up more of your valuable time, Mr. Lyon. I know that you have not many spare evenings."

"That is true, my young friend; for I now go to Sproxton one evening in the week. I do not despair that we may some day need a chapel there, though the hearers do not multiply save among the women, and there is no work as yet begun among the miners themselves. I shall be glad of your company in my walk thither to-morrow at five o'clock, if you would like to see how that population has grown of late years."

"Oh, I've been to Sproxton already several times. I had a congregation of my own there last Sunday evening."

"What! do you preach?" said Mr. Lyon, with a brightened glance.

"Not exactly. I went to the alehouse."

Mr. Lyon started. "I trust you are putting a riddle to me, young man, even as Samson did to his companions. From what you said but lately, it cannot be that you are given to tippling and to taverns."

"Oh, I don't drink much. I order a pint of beer, and I get into talk with the fellows over their pots and pipes. Somebody must take a little knowledge and common-sense to them in this way, else how are they to get it? I go for educating the non-electors, so I put myself in the way of my pupils; my academy is the beer-house. I'll walk with you to-morrow with great pleasure."

"Do so, do so," said Mr. Lyon, shaking hands with his odd acquaintance. "We shall understand each other better by-and-by, I doubt not."

"I wish you good-evening, Miss Lyon."

Esther bowed very slightly, without speaking.

"That is a singular young man, Esther," said the minister, walking about after Felix was gone. "I discern in him a love for whatsoever things are honest and true, which I would fain believe to be an earnest of further endowment with the wisdom that is from on high. It is true that, as the traveller in the desert is often lured, by a false vision of water and freshness, to turn aside from the track which leads to the tried and established fountains, so the Evil One will take advantage of a natural yearning towards the better, to delude the soul with a

self-flattering belief in a visionary virtue, higher than the ordinary fruits of the Spirit. But I trust it is not so here. I feel a great enlargement in this young man's presence, notwithstanding a certain license in his language, which I shall use my efforts to correct."

"I think he is very coarse and rude," said Esther with a touch of temper in her voice. "But he speaks better English than most of our visitors. What is his occupation?"

"Watch and clock making, by which, together with a little teaching, as I understand, he hopes to maintain his mother, not thinking it right that she should live by the sale of medicines whose virtues he distrusts. It is no common scruple."

"Dear me," said Esther, "I thought he was something higher than that." She was disappointed.

Felix, on his side, as he strolled out in the evening air, said to himself: "Now by what fine meshes of circumstance did that queer, devout old man, with his awful creed, which makes this world a vestibule with double doors to hell, and a narrow stair on one side whereby the thinner sort may mount to heaven, — by what subtle play of flesh and spirit did he come to have a daughter so little in his own likeness? Married foolishly, I suppose. I 'll never marry, though I should have to live on raw turnips to subdue my flesh. I 'll never look back and say, 'I had a fine purpose once, — I meant to keep my hands clean and my soul upright, and to look truth in the face; but pray excuse me, I have a wife and children, — I must lie and simper a

little, else they 'll starve ;' or, ' My wife is nice; she must have her bread well buttered, and her feelings will be hurt if she is not thought genteel.' That is the lot Miss Esther is preparing for some man or other. I could grind my teeth at such self-satisfied minxes, who think they can tell everybody what is the correct thing, and the utmost stretch of their ideas will not place them on a level with the intelligent fleas. I should like to see if she could be made ashamed of herself."

CHAPTER VI

> Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
> And feed my mind, that dies for want of her.
> MARLOWE: *Tamburlaine the Great.*

HARDLY any one in Treby who thought at all of Mr. Lyon and his daughter had not felt the same sort of wonder about Esther as Felix felt. She was not much liked by her father's church and congregation. The less serious observed that she had too many airs and graces, and held her head much too high; the stricter sort feared greatly that Mr. Lyon had not been sufficiently careful in placing his daughter among God-fearing people, and that, being led astray by the melancholy vanity of giving her exceptional accomplishments, he had sent her to a French school, and allowed her to take situations where she had contracted notions not only above her own rank, but of too worldly a kind to be safe in any rank. But no one knew what sort of a woman her mother had been, for Mr. Lyon never spoke of his past domesticities. When he was chosen as pastor at Treby in 1825, it was understood that he had been a widower many years, and he had no companion but the tearful and much exercised Lyddy, his daughter being still at school. It was only two years ago that Esther had come home to live permanently with her father, and take pupils in the town. Within that time she

had excited a passion in two young Dissenting breasts that were clad in the best style of Treby waistcoat, — a garment which at that period displayed much design both in the stuff and the wearer; and she had secured an astonished admiration of her cleverness from the girls of various ages who were her pupils; indeed, her knowledge of French was generally held to give a distinction to Treby itself as compared with other market-towns. But she had won little regard of any other kind. Wise Dissenting matrons were divided between fear lest their sons should want to marry her and resentment that she should treat those "undeniable" young men with a distant scorn which was hardly to be tolerated in a minister's daughter; not only because that parentage appeared to entail an obligation to show an exceptional degree of Christian humility, but because, looked at from a secular point of view, a poor minister must be below the substantial householders who kept him. For at that time the preacher who was paid under the Voluntary system was regarded by his flock with feelings not less mixed than the spiritual person who still took his tithe-pig or his *modus*. His gifts were admired, and tears were shed under best bonnets at his sermons; but the weaker tea was thought good enough for him; and even when he went to preach a charity sermon in a strange town, he was treated with home-made wine and the smaller bedroom. As the good Churchman's reverence was often mixed with growling, and was apt to be given chiefly to an abstract parson who was what a parson ought to be: so the good Dissenter sometimes

mixed his approval of ministerial gifts with considerable criticism and cheapening of the human vessel which contained those treasures. Mrs. Muscat and Mrs. Nuttwood applied the principle of Christian equality by remarking that Mr. Lyon had his oddities, and that he ought not to allow his daughter to indulge in such unbecoming expenditure on her gloves, shoes, and hosiery, even if she did pay for them out of her earnings. As for the Church people who engaged Miss Lyon to give lessons in their families, their imaginations were altogether prostrated by the incongruity between accomplishments and Dissent, between weekly prayer-meetings and a conversance with so lively and altogether worldly a language as the French. Esther's own mind was not free from a sense of irreconcilableness between the objects of her taste and the conditions of her lot. She knew that Dissenters were looked down upon by those whom she regarded as the most refined classes; her favourite companions, both in France and at an English school where she had been a junior teacher, had thought it quite ridiculous to have a father who was a Dissenting preacher; and when an ardently admiring school-fellow induced her parents to take Esther as a governess to the younger children, all her native tendencies towards luxury, fastidiousness, and scorn of mock gentility were strengthened by witnessing the habits of a well-born and wealthy family. Yet the position of servitude was irksome to her, and she was glad at last to live at home with her father; for though, throughout her girlhood, she had wished to avoid this lot, a little expe-

rience had taught her to prefer its comparative independence. But she was not contented with her life: she seemed to herself to be surrounded with ignoble, uninteresting conditions, from which there was no issue; for even if she had been unamiable enough to give her father pain deliberately, it would have been no satisfaction to her to go to Treby church, and visibly turn her back on Dissent. It was not religious differences, but social differences, that Esther was concerned about, and her ambitious taste would have been no more gratified in the society of the Waces than in that of the Muscats. The Waces spoke imperfect English, and played whist; the Muscats spoke the same dialect, and took in the "Evangelical Magazine." Esther liked neither of these amusements. She had one of those exceptional organizations which are quick and sensitive without being in the least morbid; she was alive to the finest shades of manner, to the nicest distinctions of tone and accent; she had a little code of her own about scents and colours, textures and behaviour, by which she secretly condemned or sanctioned all things and persons. And she was well satisfied with herself for her fastidious taste, never doubting that hers was the highest standard. She was proud that the best-born and handsomest girls at school had always said that she might be taken for a born lady. Her own pretty instep, clad in a silk stocking, her little heel, just rising from a kid slipper, her irreproachable nails and delicate wrist, were the objects of delighted consciousness to her; and she felt that it was her superiority which made her unable

to use without disgust any but the finest cambric handkerchiefs and freshest gloves. Her money all went in the gratification of these nice tastes, and she saved nothing from her earnings. I cannot say that she had any pangs of conscience on this score; for she felt sure that she was generous: she hated all meanness, would empty her purse impulsively on some sudden appeal to her pity, and if she found out that her father had a want, she would supply it with some pretty device of a surprise. But then the good man so seldom had a want, — except the perpetual desire, which she could never gratify, of seeing her under convictions, and fit to become a member of the church.

As for little Mr. Lyon, he loved and admired this unregenerate child more, he feared, than was consistent with the due preponderance of impersonal and ministerial regards: he prayed and pleaded for her with tears, humbling himself for her spiritual deficiencies in the privacy of his study; and then came downstairs to find himself in timorous subjection to her wishes, lest, as he inwardly said, he should give his teaching an ill savour, by mingling it with outward crossing. There will be queens in spite of Salic or other laws of later date than Adam and Eve; and here, in this small dingy house of the minister in Malthouse Yard, there was a light-footed, sweet-voiced Queen Esther.

The stronger will always rule, say some, with an air of confidence which is like a lawyer's flourish, forbidding exceptions or additions. But what is strength? Is it blind wilfulness that sees no terrors, no many-linked consequences,

no bruises and wounds of those whose cords it tightens? Is it the narrowness of a brain that conceives no needs differing from its own, and looks to no results beyond the bargains of to-day; that tugs with emphasis for every small purpose, and thinks it weakness to exercise the sublime power of resolved renunciation? There is a sort of subjection which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and of love; and strength is often only another name for willing bondage to irremediable weakness.

Esther had affection for her father; she recognized the purity of his character, and a quickness of intellect in him which responded to her own liveliness, in spite of what seemed a dreary piety, which selected everything that was least interesting and romantic in life and history. But his old clothes had a smoky odour, and she did not like to walk with him, because, when people spoke to him in the street, it was his wont, instead of remarking on the weather and passing on, to pour forth in an absent manner some reflections that were occupying his mind about the traces of the Divine government, or about a peculiar incident narrated in the life of the eminent Mr. Richard Baxter. Esther had a horror of appearing ridiculous even in the eyes of vulgar Trebians. She fancied that she should have loved her mother better than she was able to love her father; and she wished she could have remembered that mother more thoroughly.

But she had no more than a broken vision of the time before she was five years old, — the time when the word oftenest on her lips was "Mamma;" when a low voice spoke caressing

French words to her, and she in her turn repeated the words to her rag-doll; when a very small white hand, different from any that came after, used to pat her and stroke her, and tie on her frock and pinafore, and when at last there was nothing but sitting with a doll on a bed where mamma was lying, till her father once carried her away. Where distinct memory began, there was no longer the low caressing voice and the small white hand. She knew that her mother was a Frenchwoman, that she had been in want and distress, and that her maiden name was Annette Ledru. Her father had told her no more than this; and once, in her childhood, when she had asked him some question, he had said, "My Esther, until you are a woman, we will only think of your mother. When you are about to be married and leave me, we will speak of her, and I will deliver to you her ring and all that was hers; but, without a great command laid upon me, I cannot pierce my heart by speaking of that which was and is not." Esther had never forgotten these words; and the older she became, the more impossible she felt it that she should urge her father with questions about the past.

His inability to speak of that past to her depended on manifold causes. Partly it came from an initial concealment. He had not the courage to tell Esther that he was not really her father; he had not the courage to renounce that hold on her tenderness which the belief in his natural fatherhood must help to give him, or to incur any resentment that her quick spirit might feel at having been brought up under a

false supposition. But there were other things yet more difficult for him to be quite open about, — deep sorrows of his life as a Christian minister that were hardly to be told to a girl.

Twenty-two years before, when Rufus Lyon was no more than thirty-six years old, he was the admired pastor of a large Independent congregation in one of our southern seaport towns. He was unmarried, and had met all exhortations of friends who represented to him that a bishop — that is, the overseer of an Independent church and congregation — should be the husband of one wife, by saying that Saint Paul meant this particular as a limitation, and not as an injunction ; that a minister was permitted to have one wife, but that he, Rufus Lyon, did not wish to avail himself of that permission, finding his studies and other labours of his vocation all-absorbing, and seeing that mothers in Israel were sufficiently provided by those who had not been set apart for a more special work. His church and congregation were proud of him ; he was put forward on platforms, was made a "deputation," and was requested to preach anniversary sermons in far-off towns. Wherever noteworthy preachers were discussed, Rufus Lyon was almost sure to be mentioned as one who did honour to the Independent body ; his sermons were said to be full of study, yet full of fire ; and while he had more of human knowledge than many of his brethren, he showed in an eminent degree the marks of a true ministerial vocation. But on a sudden this burning and shining light seemed to be quenched : Mr.

Lyon voluntarily resigned his charge and withdrew from the town.

A terrible crisis had come upon him; a moment in which religious doubt and newly awakened passion had rushed together in a common flood, and had paralyzed his ministerial gifts. His life of thirty-six years had been a story of purely religious and studious fervour; his passion had been for doctrines, for argumentative conquest on the side of right; the sins he had had chiefly to pray against had been those of personal ambition (under such forms as ambition takes in the mind of a man who has chosen the career of an Independent preacher), and those of a too restless intellect, ceaselessly urging questions concerning the mystery of that which was assuredly revealed, and thus hindering the due nourishment of the soul on the substance of the truth delivered. Even at that time of comparative youth his unworldliness and simplicity in small matters (for he was keenly awake to the larger affairs of this world) gave a certain oddity to his manners and appearance; and though his sensitive face had much beauty, his person altogether seemed so irrelevant to a fashionable view of things that well-dressed ladies and gentlemen usually laughed at him, as they probably did at Mr. John Milton after the Restoration and ribbons had come in, and still more at that apostle, of weak bodily presence, who preached, in the back streets of Ephesus and elsewhere, a new view of a new religion that hardly anybody believed in. Rufus Lyon was the singular-looking apostle of the Meeting in Skipper's Lane. Was it likely that any romance should befall such a

man? Perhaps not; but romance did befall him.

One winter's evening in 1812, Mr. Lyon was returning from a village preaching. He walked at his usual rapid rate, with busy thoughts undistracted by any sight more distinct than the bushes and hedgerow trees, black beneath a faint moonlight, until something suggested to him that he had perhaps omitted to bring away with him a thin account-book in which he recorded certain subscriptions. He paused, unfastened his outer coat, and felt in all his pockets; then he took off his hat and looked inside it. The book was not to be found, and he was about to walk on, when he was startled by hearing a low, sweet voice say, with a strong foreign accent, —

"Have pity on me, sir."

Searching with his short-sighted eyes, he perceived some one on a side-bank; and approaching, he found a young woman with a baby on her lap. She spoke again more faintly than before.

"Sir, I die with hunger; in the name of God, take the little one."

There was no distrusting the pale face and the sweet low voice. Without pause Mr. Lyon took the baby in his arms, and said, "Can you walk by my side, young woman?"

She rose, but seemed tottering. "Lean on me," said Mr. Lyon. And so they walked slowly on, the minister for the first time in his life carrying a baby.

Nothing better occurred to him than to take his charge to his own house; it was the simplest

way of relieving the woman's wants, and finding out how she could be helped further; and he thought of no other possibilities. She was too feeble for more words to be spoken between them till she was seated by his fireside. His elderly servant was not easily amazed at anything her master did in the way of charity, and at once took the baby, while Mr. Lyon unfastened the mother's damp bonnet and shawl, and gave her something warm to drink. Then, waiting by her till it was time to offer her more, he had nothing to do but to notice the loveliness of her face, which seemed to him as that of an angel, with a benignity in its repose that carried a more assured sweetness than any smile. Gradually she revived, lifted up her delicate hands between her face and the firelight, and looked at the baby which lay opposite to her on the old servant's lap, taking in spoonfuls with much content, and stretching out naked feet towards the warmth. Then, as her consciousness of relief grew into contrasting memory, she lifted up her eyes to Mr. Lyon, who stood close by her, and said in her pretty, broken way, —

"I knew you had a good heart when you took your hat off. You seemed to me as the image of the *bien-aimé Saint Jean*."

The grateful glance of those blue-gray eyes, with their long shadow-making eyelashes, was a new kind of good to Rufus Lyon; it seemed to him as if a woman had never really looked at him before. Yet this poor thing was apparently a blind French Catholic, — of delicate nurture, surely, judging from her hands. He was in a tremor; he felt that it would be rude to

question her, and he only urged her now to take a little food. She accepted it with evident enjoyment, looking at the child continually, and then, with a fresh burst of gratitude, leaning forward to press the servant's hand and say, "Oh, you are good!" Then she looked up at Mr. Lyon again and said, "Is there in the world a prettier *marmot?*"

The evening passed; a bed was made up for the strange woman, and Mr. Lyon had not asked her so much as her name. He never went to bed himself that night. He spent it in misery, enduring a horrible assault of Satan. He thought a frenzy had seized him. Wild visions of an impossible future thrust themselves upon him. He dreaded lest the woman had a husband; he wished that he might call her his own, that he might worship her beauty, that she might love and caress him. And what to the mass of men would have been only one of many allowable follies — a transient fascination, to be dispelled by daylight and contact with those common facts of which common-sense is the reflex — was to him a spiritual convulsion. He was as one who raved, and knew that he raved. These mad wishes were irreconcilable with what he was and must be, as a Christian minister; nay, penetrating his soul as tropic heat penetrates the frame, and changes for it all aspects and all flavours, they were irreconcilable with that conception of the world which made his faith. All the busy doubt which had before been mere impish shadows flitting around a belief that was strong with the strength of an unswerving moral bias,

had now gathered blood and substance. The questioning spirit had become suddenly bold and blasphemous: it no longer insinuated scepticism, — it prompted defiance; it no longer expressed cool inquisitive thought, but was the voice of a passionate mood. Yet he never ceased to regard it as the voice of the tempter; the conviction which had been the law of his better life remained within him as a conscience.

The struggle of that night was an abridgment of all the struggles that came after. Quick souls have their intensest life in the first anticipatory sketch of what may or will be, and the pursuit of their wish is the pursuit of that paradisiacal vision which only impelled them, and is left farther and farther behind, vanishing forever even out of hope in the moment which is called success.

The next morning Mr. Lyon heard his guest's history. She was the daughter of a French officer of considerable rank, who had fallen in the Russian campaign. She had escaped from France to England with much difficulty in order to rejoin her husband, a young Englishman, to whom she had become attached during his detention as a prisoner of war on parole at Vesoul, where she was living under the charge of some relatives, and to whom she had been married without the consent of her family. Her husband had served in the Hanoverian army, had obtained his discharge in order to visit England on some business, with the nature of which she was not acquainted, and had been taken prisoner as a suspected spy. A short time after their marriage he and his fellow-

prisoners had been moved to a town nearer the coast, and she had remained in wretched uncertainty about him, until at last a letter had come from him telling her that an exchange of prisoners had occurred, that he was in England, that she must use her utmost effort to follow him, and that on arriving on English ground she must send him word under a cover which he enclosed, bearing an address in London. Fearing the opposition of her friends, she started unknown to them, with a very small supply of money; and after enduring much discomfort and many fears in waiting for a passage, which she at last got in a small trading-smack, she arrived at Southampton — ill. Before she was able to write, her baby was born; and before her husband's answer came, she had been obliged to pawn some clothes and trinkets. He desired her to travel to London, where he would meet her at the Belle Sauvage, adding that he was himself in distress, and unable to come to her; when once she was in London, they would take ship and quit the country. Arrived at the Belle Sauvage, the poor thing waited three days in vain for her husband; on the fourth a letter came in a strange hand, saying that in his last moments he had desired this letter to be written to inform her of his death, and recommend her to return to her friends. She could choose no other course; but she had soon been reduced to walking, that she might save her pence to buy bread with; and on the evening when she made her appeal to Mr. Lyon, she had pawned the last thing, over and above needful cloth-

ing, that she could persuade herself to part with. The things she had not borne to part with were her marriage ring, and a locket containing her husband's hair and bearing his baptismal name. This locket, she said, exactly resembled one worn by her husband on his watch-chain, only that his bore the name Annette, and contained a lock of her hair. The precious trifle now hung round her neck by a cord, for she had sold the small gold chain which formerly held it.

The only guarantee of this story, besides the exquisite candour of her face, was a small packet of papers which she carried in her pocket, consisting of her husband's few letters, the letter which announced his death, and her marriage certificate. It was not so probable a story as that of many an inventive vagrant; but Mr. Lyon did not doubt it for a moment. It was impossible to him to suspect this angelic-faced woman, but he had strong suspicions concerning her husband. He could not help being glad that she had not retained the address he had desired her to send to in London, as that removed any obvious means of learning particulars about him. But inquiries might have been made at Vesoul by letter, and her friends there might have been appealed to. A consciousness, not to be quite silenced, told Mr. Lyon that this was the course he ought to take, but it would have required an energetic self-conquest, and he was excused from it by Annette's own disinclination to return to her relatives, if any other acceptable possibility could be found.

He dreaded, with a violence of feeling which surmounted all struggles, lest anything should take her away, and place such barriers between them as would make it unlikely or impossible that she should ever love him well enough to become his wife. Yet he saw with perfect clearness that unless he tore up this mad passion by the roots, his ministerial usefulness would be frustrated, and the repose of his soul would be destroyed. This woman was an unregenerate Catholic; ten minutes' listening to her artless talk made that plain to him. Even if her position had been less equivocal, to unite himself to such a woman was nothing less than a spiritual fall. It was already a fall that he had wished there was no high purpose to which he owed an allegiance, — that he had longed to fly to some backwoods where there was no church to reproach him, and where he might have this sweet woman to wife, and know the joys of tenderness. Those sensibilities which in most lives are diffused equally through the youthful years were aroused suddenly in Mr. Lyon, as some men have their special genius revealed to them by a tardy concurrence of conditions. His love was the first love of a fresh young heart full of wonder and worship. But what to one man is the virtue which he has sunk below the possibility of aspiring to, is to another the backsliding by which he forfeits his spiritual crown.

The end was, that Annette remained in his house. He had striven against himself so far as to represent her position to some chief matrons in his congregation, praying and yet dreading that they would so take her by the

hand as to impose on him that denial of his own longing not to let her go out of his sight, which he found it too hard to impose on himself. But they regarded the case coldly; the woman was, after all, a vagrant. Mr. Lyon was observed to be surprisingly weak on the subject, — his eagerness seemed disproportionate and unbecoming; and this young Frenchwoman, unable to express herself very clearly, was no more interesting to those matrons and their husbands than other pretty young women suspiciously circumstanced. They were willing to subscribe something to carry her on her way, or if she took some lodgings they would give her a little sewing, and endeavour to convert her from Papistry. If, however, she was a respectable person, as she said, the only proper thing for her was to go back to her own country and friends. In spite of himself, Mr. Lyon exulted. There seemed a reason now that he should keep Annette under his own eyes. He told himself that no real object would be served by his providing food and lodging for her elsewhere, — an expense which he could ill afford. And she was apparently so helpless, except as to the one task of attending to her baby, that it would have been folly to think of her exerting herself for her own support.

But this course of his was severely disapproved by his church. There were various signs that the minister was under some evil influence; his preaching wanted its old fervour, he seemed to shun the intercourse of his brethren, and very mournful suspicions were entertained. A formal remonstrance was presented

to him, but he met it as if he had already determined to act in anticipation of it. He admitted that external circumstances, conjoined with a peculiar state of mind, were likely to hinder the fruitful exercise of his ministry, and he resigned it. There was much sorrowing, much expostulation, but he declared that for the present he was unable to unfold himself more fully; he only wished to state solemnly that Annette Ledru, though blind in spiritual things, was in a worldly sense a pure and virtuous woman. No more was to be said, and he departed to a distant town. Here he maintained himself, Annette, and the child with the remainder of his stipend, and with the wages he earned as a printer's reader. Annette was one of those angelic-faced helpless women who take all things as manna from heaven; the good image of the well-beloved Saint John wished her to stay with him, and there was nothing else that she wished for except the unattainable. Yet for a whole year Mr. Lyon never dared to tell Annette that he loved her: he trembled before this woman; he saw that the idea of his being her lover was too remote from her mind for her to have any idea that she ought not to live with him. She had never known, never asked the reason why he gave up his ministry. She seemed to entertain as little concern about the strange world in which she lived as a bird in its nest; an avalanche had fallen over the past, but she sat warm and uncrushed, — there was food for many morrows, and her baby flourished. She did not seem even to care about a priest, or about having her child bap-

tized; and on the subject of religion Mr. Lyon was as timid, and shrank as much from speaking to her, as on the subject of his love. He dreaded anything that might cause her to feel a sudden repulsion towards him. He dreaded disturbing her simple gratitude and content. In these days his religious faith was not slumbering; it was awake and achingly conscious of having fallen in a struggle. He had had a great treasure committed to him, and had flung it away; he held himself a backslider. His unbelieving thoughts never gained the full ear and consent of his soul. His prayers had been stifled by the sense that there was something he preferred to complete obedience; they had ceased to be anything but intermittent cries and confessions, and a submissive presentiment, rising at times even to an entreaty, that some great discipline might come, that the dulled spiritual sense might be roused to full vision and hearing as of old, and the supreme facts become again supreme in his soul. Mr. Lyon will perhaps seem a very simple personage, with pitiably narrow theories; but none of our theories are quite large enough for all the disclosures of time, and to the end of men's struggles a penalty will remain for those who sink from the ranks of the heroes into the crowd for whom the heroes fight and die.

One day, however, Annette learned Mr. Lyon's secret. The baby had a tooth coming, and being large and strong now, was noisily fretful. Mr. Lyon, though he had been working extra hours and was much in need of repose, took the child from its mother im-

mediately on entering the house, and walked about with it, patting and talking soothingly to it. The stronger grasp, the new sensations, were a successful anodyne, and baby went to sleep on his shoulder; but fearful lest any movement should disturb it, he sat down, and endured the bondage of holding it still against his shoulder.

"You do nurse baby well," said Annette, approvingly; "yet you never nursed before I came?"

"No," said Mr. Lyon; "I had no brothers and sisters."

"Why were you not married?" Annette had never thought of asking that question before.

"Because I never loved any woman — till now. I thought I should never marry. Now I wish to marry."

Annette started. She did not see at once that she was the woman he wanted to marry; what had flashed on her mind was that there might be a great change in Mr. Lyon's life. It was as if the lightning had entered into her dream and half awaked her.

"Do you think it foolish, Annette, that I should wish to marry?"

"I did not expect it," she said doubtfully. "I did not know you thought about it."

"You know the woman I should like to marry?"

"I know her?" she said interrogatively, blushing deeply.

"It is you, Annette, — you, whom I have loved better than my duty. I forsook everything for you."

Mr. Lyon paused; he was about to do what he felt would be ignoble, — to urge what seemed like a claim.

"Can you love me, Annette? Will you be my wife?" Annette trembled and looked miserable.

"Do not speak, — forget it," said Mr. Lyon, rising suddenly and speaking with loud energy. "No, no — I do not want it, I do not wish it."

The baby awoke as he started up; he gave the child into Annette's arms, and left her.

His work took him away early the next morning, and the next again. They did not need to speak much to each other. The third day Mr. Lyon was too ill to go to work. His frame had been overwrought; he had been too poor to have sufficiently nourishing food, and under the shattering of his long-deferred hope his health had given way. They had no regular servant, — only occasional help from an old woman, who lit the fires and put on the kettles. Annette was forced to be the sick-nurse, and this sudden demand on her shook away some of her torpor. The illness was a serious one; and the medical man one day hearing Mr. Lyon in his delirium raving with an astonishing fluency in Biblical language, suddenly looked round with increased curiosity at Annette, and asked if she were the sick man's wife or some other relative.

"No, — no relation," said Annette, shaking her head. "He has been good to me."

"How long have you lived with him?"

"More than a year."

"Was he a preacher once?"

"Yes."

"When did he leave off being a preacher?"

"Soon after he took care of me."

"Is that his child?"

"Sir," said Annette, colouring indignantly, "I am a widow."

The doctor, she thought, looked at her oddly; but he asked no more questions.

When the sick man was getting better, and able to enjoy invalid's food, he observed one day, while he was taking some broth, that Annette was looking at him; he paused to look at her in return, and was struck with a new expression in her face, quite distinct from the merely passive sweetness which usually characterized it. She laid her little hand on his, which was now transparently thin, and said, "I am getting very wise; I have sold some of the books to make money,—the doctor told me where; and I have looked into the shops where they sell caps and bonnets and pretty things, and I can do all that, and get more money to keep us. And when you are well enough to get up, we will go out and be married—shall we not? See! and *la petite*" (the baby had never been named anything else) "shall call you Papa,—and then we shall never part."

Mr. Lyon trembled. This illness—something else, perhaps—had made a great change in Annette. A fortnight after that they were married. The day before, he had ventured to ask her if she felt any difficulty about her religion, and if she would consent to have *la petite* baptized and brought up as a Protestant. She shook her head, and said very simply,—

"No: in France, in other days, I would have minded; but all is changed. I never was fond of religion, but I knew it was right. *J'amais les fleurs, les bals, la musique, et mon mari, qui était beau.* But all that is gone away. There is nothing of my religion in this country. But the good God must be here, for you are good; I leave all to you."

It was clear that Annette regarded her present life as a sort of death to the world, — an existence on a remote island where she had been saved from wreck. She was too indolent mentally, too little interested, to acquaint herself with any secrets of the isle. The transient energy, the more vivid consciousness and sympathy which had been stirred in her during Mr. Lyon's illness, had soon subsided into the old apathy to everything except her child. She withered like a plant in strange air; and the three years of life that remained were but a slow and gentle death. Those three years were to Mr. Lyon a period of such self-suppression and life in another as few men know. Strange that the passion for this woman, which he felt to have drawn him aside from the right as much as if he had broken the most solemn vows — for that only was right to him which he held the best and highest — the passion for a being who had no glimpse of his thoughts induced a more thorough renunciation than he had ever known in the time of his complete devotion to his ministerial career. He had no flattery now, either from himself or the world; he knew that he had fallen, and *his* world had forgotten him, or shook their heads at his memory. The only

satisfaction he had was the satisfaction of his tenderness, — which meant untiring work, untiring patience, untiring wakefulness even to the dumb signs of feeling in a creature whom he alone cared for.

The day of parting came, and he was left with little Esther as the one visible sign of that four years' break in his life. A year afterwards he entered the ministry again, and lived with the utmost sparingness, that Esther might be so educated as to be able to get her own bread in case of his death. Her probable facility in acquiring French naturally suggested his sending her to a French school, which would give her a special advantage as a teacher. It was a Protestant school, and French Protestantism had the high recommendation of being non-Prelatical. It was understood that Esther would contract no Papistical superstitions; and this was perfectly true; but she contracted, as we see, a good deal of non-Papistical vanity.

Mr. Lyon's reputation as a preacher and devoted pastor had revived; but some dissatisfaction beginning to be felt by his congregation at a certain laxity detected by them in his views as to the limits of salvation, which he had in one sermon even hinted might extend to unconscious recipients of mercy, he had found it desirable seven years ago to quit this ten years' pastorate and accept a call from the less important church in Malthouse Yard, Treby Magna.

This was Rufus Lyon's history, at that time unknown in its fulness to any human being besides himself. We can perhaps guess what

memories they were that relaxed the stringency of his doctrine on the point of salvation. In the deepest of all senses his heart said, —

> "Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
> And feed my mind, that dies for want of her."

CHAPTER VII

M. It was but yesterday you spoke him well, —
You've changed your mind so soon?
N. Not I, — 't is he
That, changing to my thought, has changed my mind.
No man puts rotten apples in his pouch
Because their upper side looked fair to him.
Constancy in mistake is constant folly.

THE news that the rich heir of the Transomes was actually come back, and had been seen at Treby, was carried to some one else who had more reasons for being interested in it than the Rev. Rufus Lyon was yet conscious of having. It was owing to this that at three o'clock, two days afterwards, a carriage and pair, with coachman and footman in crimson and drab, passed through the lodge-gates of Transome Court. Inside there was a hale, good-natured-looking man of sixty, whose hands rested on a knotted stick held between his knees; and a blue-eyed, well-featured lady, fat and middle-aged, — a mountain of satin, lace, and exquisite muslin embroidery. They were not persons of highly remarkable appearance, but to most Trebians they seemed absolutely unique, and likely to be known anywhere. If you had looked down on them from the box of Sampson's coach, he would have said, after lifting his hat, "Sir Maximus and his lady, — did you see?" thinking it needless to add the surname.

"We shall find her greatly elated, doubtless,"

Lady Debarry was saying. "She has been in the shade so long."

"Ah, poor thing!" said Sir Maximus. "A fine woman she was in her bloom. I remember the first county ball she attended we were all ready to fight for the sake of dancing with her. I always liked her from that time, — I never swallowed the scandal about her myself."

"If we are to be intimate with her," said Lady Debarry, "I wish you would avoid making such allusions, Sir Maximus. I should not like Selina and Harriet to hear them."

"My dear, I should have forgotten all about the scandal, only you remind me of it sometimes," retorted the Baronet, smiling, and taking out his snuff-box.

"These sudden turns of fortune are often dangerous to an excitable constitution," said Lady Debarry, not choosing to notice her husband's epigram. "Poor Lady Alicia Methurst got heart-disease from a sudden piece of luck, — the death of her uncle, you know. If Mrs. Transome were wise she would go to town — she can afford it now — and consult Dr. Truncheon. I should say myself he would order her digitalis; I have often guessed exactly what a prescription would be. But it certainly was always one of her weak points to think that she understood medicine better than other people."

"She 's a healthy woman enough, surely: see how upright she is, and she rides about like a girl of twenty."

"She is so thin that she makes me shudder."

"Pooh! she 's slim and active; women are not bid for by the pound."

"Pray don't be so coarse!"

Sir Maximus laughed, and showed his good teeth, which made his laughter very becoming. The carriage stopped, and they were soon ushered into Mrs. Transome's sitting-room, where she was working at her worsted embroidery. A little daily embroidery had been a constant element in Mrs. Transome's life; that soothing occupation of taking stitches to produce what neither she nor any one else wanted, was then the resource of many a well-born and unhappy woman.

She received much warm congratulation and pressure of her hand with perfect composure of manner; but she became paler than usual, and her hands turned quite cold. The Debarrys did not yet know what Harold's politics were.

"Well, our lucky youngster is come in the nick of time," said Sir Maximus; "if he 'll stand, he and Philip can run in harness together and keep out both the Whigs."

"It is really quite a providential thing, — his returning just now," said Lady Debarry. "I could n't help thinking that something would occur to prevent Philip from having such a man as Peter Garstin for his colleague."

"I call my friend Harold a youngster," said Sir Maximus; "for, you know, I remember him only as he was when that portrait was taken."

"That is a long while ago," said Mrs. Transome. "My son is much altered, as you may imagine."

There was a confused sound of voices in the library while this talk was going on. Mrs.

Transome chose to ignore that noise; but her face, from being pale, began to flush a little.

"Yes, yes, on the outside, I dare say. But he was a fine fellow, — I always liked him. And if anybody had asked me what I should choose for the good of the county, I could n't have thought of anything better than having a young Transome for a neighbour who will take an active part. The Transomes and the Debarrys were always on the right side together in old days. Of course he 'll stand, — he has made up his mind to it?"

The need for an answer to this embarrassing question was deferred by the increase of inarticulate sounds accompanied by a bark from the library, and the sudden appearance at the tapestry-hung doorway of old Mr. Transome with a cord round his waist, playing a very poor-paced horse for a black-maned little boy about three years old, who was urging him on with loud encouraging noises and occasional thumps from a stick which he wielded with some difficulty. The old man paused with a vague, gentle smile at the doorway, while the Baronet got up to speak to him. Nimrod snuffed at his master's legs to ascertain that he was not hurt; and the little boy, finding something new to be looked at, let go the cord and came round in front of the company, dragging his stick, and standing at a safe war-dancing distance as he fixed his great black eyes on Lady Debarry.

"Dear me, what a splendid little boy, Mrs. Transome! Why — it cannot be — can it be — that you have the happiness to be a grandmamma?"

"Yes; that is my son's little boy."

"Indeed!" said Lady Debarry, really amazed. "I never heard you speak of his marriage. He has brought you home a daughter-in-law, then?"

"No," said Mrs. Transome, coldly; "she is dead."

"O-o-oh!" said Lady Debarry, in a tone ludicrously undecided between condolence, satisfaction, and general mistiness. "How very singular — I mean that we should not have heard of Mr. Harold's marriage! But he 's a charming little fellow: come to me, you round-cheeked cherub!"

The black eyes continued fixed as if by a sort of fascination on Lady Debarry's face, and her affable invitation was unheeded. At last, putting his head forward and pouting his lips, the cherub gave forth with marked intention the sounds "Nau-o-oom," many times repeated; apparently they summed up his opinion of Lady Debarry, and may perhaps have meant "naughty old woman," but his speech was a broken, lisping polyglot of hazardous interpretation. Then he turned to pull at the Blenheim spaniel, which, being old and peevish, gave a little snap.

"Go, go, Harry; let poor Puff alone, — he 'll bite you," said Mrs. Transome, stooping to release her aged pet.

Her words were too suggestive; for Harry immediately laid hold of her arm with his teeth, and bit with all his might. Happily the stuffs upon it were some protection, but the pain forced Mrs. Transome to give a low cry; and Sir Maximus, who had now turned to reseat himself,

shook the little rascal off, whereupon he burst away and trotted into the library again.

"I fear you are hurt," said Lady Debarry, with sincere concern. "What a little savage! Do have your arm attended to, my dear — I recommend fomentation — don't think of me."

"Oh, thank you, it is nothing," said Mrs. Transome, biting her lip and smiling alternately; "it will soon go off. The pleasures of being a grandmamma, you perceive. The child has taken a dislike to me; but he makes quite a new life for Mr. Transome, — they were playfellows at once."

"Bless my heart!" said Sir Maximus, "it is odd to think of Harold having been a family man so long. I made up my mind he was a young bachelor. What an old stager I am, to be sure! And whom has he married? I hope we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Harold Transome." Sir Maximus, occupied with old Mr. Transome, had not overheard the previous conversation on that subject.

"She is no longer living," Lady Debarry hastily interposed; "but now, my dear Sir Maximus, we must not hinder Mrs. Transome from attending to her arm. I am sure she is in pain. Don't say another word, my dear, — we shall see you again, — you and Mr. Harold will come and dine with us on Thursday — say yes, only yes. Sir Maximus is longing to see him; and Philip will be down."

"Yes, yes!" said Sir Maximus; "he must lose no time in making Philip's acquaintance. Tell him Philip is a fine fellow, — carried everything before him at Oxford. And your son

must be returned along with him for North Loamshire. You said he meant to stand?"

"I will write and let you know if Harold has any engagement for Thursday; he would of course be happy otherwise," said Mrs. Transome evading the question.

"If not Thursday, the next day,—the very first day he can."

The visitors left, and Mrs. Transome was almost glad of the painful bite which had saved her from being questioned further about Harold's politics. "This is the last visit I shall receive from them," she said to herself as the door closed behind them and she rang for Denner.

"That poor creature is not happy, Sir Maximus," said Lady Debarry as they drove along. "Something annoys her about her son. I hope there is nothing unpleasant in his character. Either he kept his marriage a secret from her, or she was ashamed of it. He is thirty-four at least by this time. After living in the East so long, he may have become a sort of person one would not care to be intimate with; and that savage boy,—he does n't look like a lady's child."

"Pooh, my dear," said Sir Maximus, "women think so much of these minutiæ. In the present state of the country it is our duty to look at a man's position and politics. Philip and my brother are both of that opinion, and I think they know what 's right, if any man does. We are bound to regard every man of our party as a public instrument, and to pull all together. The Transomes have always been a good Tory family, but it has been a cipher of late years. This

young fellow coming back with a fortune to give the family a head and a position is a clear gain to the county; and with Philip he 'll get into the right hands, — of course he wants guiding, having been out of the country so long. All we have to ask is, whether a man 's a Tory, and will make a stand for the good of the country? — that 's the plain English of the matter. And I do beg of you, my dear, to set aside all these gossiping niceties, and exert yourself, like a woman of sense and spirit as you are, to bring the right people together."

Here Sir Maximus gave a deep cough, took out his snuff-box, and tapped it; he had made a serious marital speech, — an exertion to which he was rarely urged by anything smaller than a matter of conscience. And this outline of the whole duty of a Tory was matter of conscience with him; though the "Duffield Watchman" had pointed expressly to Sir Maximus Debarry amongst others, in branding the co-operation of the Tories as a conscious selfishness and reckless immorality, which, however, would be defeated by the co-operation of all the friends of truth and liberty, who, the "Watchman" trusted, would subordinate all non-political differences in order to return representatives pledged to support the present Government.

"I am sure, Sir Maximus," Lady Debarry answered, "you could not have observed that anything was wanting in my manners to Mrs. Transome."

"No, no, my dear; but I say this by way of caution. Never mind what was done at Smyrna, or whether Transome likes to sit with his heels

tucked up. We may surely wink at a few things for the sake of the public interest, if God Almighty does; and if he did n't, I don't know what would have become of the country, — Government could never have been carried on, and many a good battle would have been lost. That 's the philosophy of the matter, and the common-sense too."

Good Sir Maximus gave a deep cough and tapped his box again, inwardly remarking that if he had not been such a lazy fellow he might have been made as good a figure as his son Philip.

But at this point the carriage, which was rolling by a turn towards Treby Magna, passed a well-dressed man, who raised his hat to Sir Maximus, and called to the coachman to stop.

"Excuse me, Sir Maximus," said this personage, standing uncovered at the carriage-door, "but I have just learned something of importance at Treby, which I thought you would like to know as soon as possible."

"Ah! what 's that? Something about Garstin or Clement?" said Sir Maximus, seeing the other draw a poster from his pocket.

"No; rather worse, I fear you will think. A new Radical candidate. I got this by a stratagem from the printer's boy. They 're not posted yet."

"A Radical!" said Sir Maximus, in a tone of incredulous disgust, as he took the folded bill. "What fool is he? — he 'll have no chance."

"They say he 's richer than Garstin."

"Harold Transome!" shouted Sir Maximus,

as he read the name in three-inch letters. "I don't believe it, — it 's a trick, it 's a squib ; why — why — we 've just been to his place — eh ? do you know any more ? Speak, sir, speak ; don't deal out your story like a damned mountebank, who wants to keep people gaping."

"Sir Maximus, pray don't give way so," said Lady Debarry.

"I 'm afraid there 's no doubt about it, sir," said Christian. "After getting the bill, I met Mr. Labron's clerk, and he said he had just had the whole story from Jermyn's clerk. The Ram Inn is engaged already, and a committee is being made up. He says Jermyn goes like a steam-engine, when he has a mind, although he makes such long-winded speeches."

"Jermyn be hanged for a two-faced rascal ! Tell Mitchell to drive on. It 's of no use to stay chattering here. Jump up on the box and go home with us. I may want you."

"You see I was right, Sir Maximus," said the Baronet's wife ; "I had an instinct that we should find him an unpleasant person."

"Fudge ! if you had such a fine instinct, why did you let us go to Transome Court and make fools of ourselves ? "

"Would you have listened to me ? But of course you will not have him to dine with you ? "

"Dine with me ? I should think not. I 'd sooner he should dine off me. I see how it is, clearly enough. He has become a regular beast among those Mahometans, — he 's got neither religion nor morals left. He can't know anything about English politics. He 'll go and cut his own nose off as a landholder, and never

know. However, he won't get in, — he 'll spend his money for nothing."

"I fear he is a very licentious man," said Lady Debarry. "We know now why his mother seemed so uneasy. I should think she reflects a little, poor creature."

"It 's a confounded nuisance we did n't meet Christian on our way, instead of coming back; but better now than later. He 's an uncommonly adroit, useful fellow, that factotum of Philip's. I wish Phil would take my man and give me Christian. I 'd make him house-steward; he might reduce the accounts a little."

Perhaps Sir Maximus would not have been so sanguine as to Mr. Christian's economical virtues if he had seen that gentleman relaxing himself the same evening among the other distinguished dependants of the family and frequenters of the steward's room. But a man of Sir Maximus's rank is like those antediluvian animals whom the system of things condemned to carry such a huge bulk that they really could not inspect their bodily appurtenance, and had no conception of their own tails: their parasites doubtless had a merry time of it, and often did extremely well when the high-bred saurian himself was ill at ease. Treby Manor, measured from the front saloon to the remotest shed, was as large as a moderate-sized village, and there were certainly more lights burning in it every evening, more wine, spirits, and ale drunk, more waste and more folly, than could be found in some large villages. There was fast revelry in the steward's room, and slow revelry in the

Scotch bailiff's room; short whist, costume, and flirtation in the housekeeper's room, and the same at a lower price in the servants' hall; a select Olympian feast in the private apartment of the cook, who was a much grander person than her ladyship, and wore gold and jewellery to a vast amount of suet; a gambling group in the stables, and the coachman, perhaps the most innocent member of the establishment, tippling in majestic solitude by a fire in the harness-room. For Sir Maximus, as every one said, was a gentleman of the right sort, condescended to no mean inquiries, greeted his head-servants with a "good-evening, gentlemen," when he met them in the Park, and only snarled in a subdued way when he looked over the accounts, willing to endure some personal inconvenience in order to keep up the institutions of the country, to maintain his hereditary establishment, and do his duty in that station of life — the station of the long-tailed saurian — to which it had pleased Providence to call him.

The focus of brilliancy at Treby Manor that evening was in no way the dining-room, where Sir Maximus sipped his port under some mental depression, as he discussed with his brother, the Reverend Augustus, the sad fact that one of the oldest names in the county was to be on the wrong side, — not in the drawing-room, where Miss Debarry and Miss Selina, quietly elegant in their dress and manners, were feeling rather dull than otherwise, having finished Mr. Bulwer's "Eugene Aram," and being thrown back on the last great prose work of Mr. Southey, while their mamma slumbered a little on the

sofa. No ; the centre of eager talk and enjoyment was the steward's room, where Mr. Scales, house-steward and head-butler, a man most solicitous about his boots, wristbands, the roll of his whiskers, and other attributes of a gentleman, distributed cigars, cognac, and whiskey to various colleagues and guests who were discussing, with that freedom of conjecture which is one of our inalienable privileges as Britons, the probable amount of Harold Transome's fortune, concerning which fame had already been busy long enough to have acquired vast magnifying power.

The chief part in this scene was undoubtedly Mr. Christian's, although he had hitherto been comparatively silent ; but he occupied two chairs with so much grace, throwing his right leg over the seat of the second, and resting his right hand on the back ; he held his cigar and displayed a splendid seal-ring with such becoming nonchalance, and had his gray hair arranged with so much taste, — that experienced eyes would at once have seen even the great Scales himself to be but a secondary character.

" Why," said Mr. Crowder, — an old respectable tenant, though much in arrear as to his rent, who condescended frequently to drink in the steward's room for the sake of the conversation, — " why, I suppose they get money so fast in the East, — it 's wonderful. Why," he went on, with a hesitating look towards Mr. Scales, " this Transome has p'r'aps got a matter of a hundred thousand."

" A hundred thousand, my dear sir ! fiddlestick's end of a hundred thousand," said Mr.

Scales, with a contempt very painful to be borne by a modest man.

"Well," said Mr. Crowder, giving way under torture, as the all-knowing butler puffed and stared at him, "perhaps not so much as that."

"Not so much, sir! I tell you that a hundred thousand pounds is a bagatelle."

"Well, I know it 's a big sum," said Mr. Crowder, deprecatingly.

Here there was a general laugh. All the other intellects present were more cultivated than Mr. Crowder's.

"Bagatelle is the French for trifle, my friend," said Mr. Christian. "Don't talk over people's heads so, Scales. I shall have hard work to understand you myself soon."

"Come, that 's a good one," said the head-gardener, who was a ready admirer; "I should like to hear the thing you don't understand, Christian."

"He 's a first-rate hand at sneering," said Mr. Scales, rather nettled.

"Don't be waspish, man. I 'll ring the bell for lemons, and make some punch. That 's the thing for putting people up to the unknown tongues," said Mr. Christian, starting up, and slapping Scales's shoulder as he passed him.

"What I mean, Mr. Crowder, is this." Here Mr. Scales paused to puff, and pull down his waistcoat in a gentlemanly manner, and drink. He was wont in this way to give his hearers time for meditation.

"Come, then, speak English; I 'm not against being taught," said the reasonable Crowder.

"What I mean is, that in a large way of trade

a man turns his capital over almost as soon as he can turn himself. Bless your soul! I know something about these matters, eh, Brent?"

"To be sure you do, — few men more," said the gardener, who was the person appealed to.

"Not that I 've had anything to do with commercial families myself. I 've those feelings that I look to other things besides lucre. But I can't say that I 've not been intimate with parties who have been less nice than I am myself; and knowing what I know, I should n't wonder if Transome had as much as five hundred thousand. Bless your soul, sir! people who get their money out of land are as long scraping five pounds together as your trading men are in turning five pounds into a hundred."

"That 's a wicked thing, though," said Mr. Crowder, meditatively. "However," he went on, retreating from this difficult ground, "trade or no trade, the Transomes have been poor enough this many a long year. I 've a brother a tenant on their estate, — I ought to know a little bit about that."

"They 've kept up no establishment at all," said Mr. Scales, with disgust. "They 've even let their kitchen gardens. I suppose it was the eldest son's gambling. I 've seen something of that. A man who has always lived in first-rate families is likely to know a thing or two on that subject."

"Ah, but it was n't gambling did the first mischief," said Mr. Crowder, with a slight smile, feeling that it was his turn to have some superiority. "New-comers don't know what happened in this country twenty and thirty years

ago. I 'm turned fifty myself, and my father lived under Sir Maxum's father. But if anybody from London can tell me more than I know about this country-side, I 'm willing to listen."

"What was it, then, if it was n't gambling?" said Mr. Scales, with some impatience. "*I* don't pretend to know."

"It was law, — law, — that 's what it was. Not but what the Transomes always won."

"And always lost," said the too ready Scales. "Yes, yes; I think we all know the nature of law."

"There was the last suit of all made the most noise, as I understood," continued Mr. Crowder; "but it was n't tried hereabout. They said there was a deal o' false swearing. Some young man pretended to be the true heir, — let me see, — I can't justly remember the names, — he 'd got two. *He* swore he was one man, and *they* swore he was another. However, Lawyer Jermyn won it, — they say he 'd win a game against the Old One himself, — and the young fellow turned out to be a scamp. Stop a bit, — his name was Scaddon, — Henry Scaddon."

Mr. Christian here let a lemon slip from his hand into the punch-bowl with a splash which sent some of the nectar into the company's faces.

"Hallo! What a bungler I am!" he said, looking as if he were quite jarred by this unusual awkwardness of his. "Go on with your tale, Mr. Crowder, — a scamp named Henry Scaddon."

"Well, that 's the tale," said Mr. Crowder. "He was never seen nothing of any more. It

was a deal talked of at the time, — and I 've sat by; and my father used to shake his head; and always when this Mrs. Transome was talked of, he used to shake his head, and say she carried things with a high hand once. But, Lord! it was before the battle of Waterloo, and I 'm a poor hand at tales; I don't see much good in 'em myself, — but if anybody 'll tell me a cure for the sheep-rot I 'll thank him."

Here Mr. Crowder relapsed into smoking and silence, a little discomfited that the knowledge of which he had been delivered had turned out rather a shapeless and insignificant birth.

"Well, well, bygones should be bygones; there are secrets in most good families," said Mr. Scales, winking, "and this Young Transome, coming back with a fortune to keep up the establishment, and have things done in a decent and gentlemanly way, — it would all have been right if he 'd not been this sort of Radical madman. But now he 's done for himself. I heard Sir Maximus say at dinner that he would be excommunicated; and that 's a pretty strong word, I take it."

"What does it mean, Scales?" said Mr. Christian, who loved tormenting.

"Ay, what 's the meaning?" insisted Mr. Crowder, encouraged by finding that even Christian was in the dark.

"Well, it 's a law term, — speaking in a figurative sort of way, — meaning that a Radical was no gentleman."

"Perhaps it 's partly accounted for by his getting his money so fast and in foreign countries," said Mr. Crowder, tentatively. "It 's reasonable

to think he 'd be against the land and this country, — eh, Sircome ? "

Sircome was an eminent miller who had considerable business transactions at the Manor, and appreciated Mr. Scales's merits at a handsome percentage on the yearly account. He was a highly honourable tradesman, but in this and in other matters submitted to the institutions of his country ; for great houses, as he observed, must have great butlers. He replied to his friend Crowder sententiously, —

" I say nothing. Before I bring words to market, I should like to see 'em a bit scarcer. There 's the land and there 's trade, — I hold with both. I swim with the stream."

" Hey-day, Mr. Sircome ! that 's a Radical maxim," said Mr. Christian, who knew that Mr. Sircome's last sentence was his favourite formula. " I advise you to give it up, else it will injure the quality of your flour."

" A Radical maxim ! " said Mr. Sircome, in a tone of angry astonishment. " I should like to hear you prove that. It 's as old as my grandfather, anyhow."

" I 'll prove it in one minute," said the glib Christian. " Reform has set in by the will of the majority,—that 's the rabble, you know; and the respectability and good sense of the country, which are in the minority, are afraid of Reform running on too fast. So the stream must be running towards Reform and Radicalism ; and if you swim with it, Mr. Sircome, you 're a Reformer and a Radical, and your flour is objectionable, and not full weight, — and being tried by Scales will be found wanting."

There was a roar of laughter. This pun upon Scales was highly appreciated by every one except the miller and the butler. The latter pulled down his waistcoat, and puffed and stared in rather an excited manner. Mr. Christian's wit, in general, seemed to him a poor kind of quibbling.

"What a fellow you are for fence, Christian!" said the gardener. "Hang me, if I don't think you 're up to everything."

"That 's a compliment you might pay Old Nick, if you come to that," said Mr. Sircome, who was in the painful position of a man deprived of his formula.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Scales; "I 'm no fool myself, and could parry a thrust if I liked; but I should n't like it to be said of me that I was up to everything. I 'll keep a little principle, if you please."

"To be sure," said Christian, ladling out the punch. "What would justice be without Scales?"

The laughter was not quite so full-throated as before. Such excessive cleverness *was* a little Satanic.

"A joke 's a joke among gentlemen," said the butler, getting exasperated; "I think there has been quite liberties enough taken with my name. But if you must talk about names, I 've heard of a party before now calling himself a Christian, and being anything *but* it."

"Come, that 's beyond a joke," said the surgeon's assistant, — a fast man, whose chief scene of dissipation was the Manor. "Let it drop, Scales."

"Yes, I dare say it's beyond a joke. I'm not a harlequin to talk nothing but jokes. I leave that to other Christians, who are up to everything, and have been everywhere, — to the hulks, for what I know: and more than that, they come from nobody knows where, and try to worm themselves into gentlemen's confidence, to the prejudice of their betters."

There was a stricter sequence in Mr. Scales's angry eloquence than was apparent, — some chief links being confined to his own breast, as is often the case in energetic discourse. The company were in a state of expectation. There was something behind worth knowing, and something before them worth seeing. In the general decay of other fine British pugnacious sports, a quarrel between gentlemen was all the more exciting; and though no one would himself have liked to turn on Scales, no one was sorry for the chance of seeing him put down. But the amazing Christian was unmoved. He had taken out his handkerchief, and was rubbing his lips carefully. After a slight pause he spoke with perfect coolness: —

"I don't intend to quarrel with you, Scales. Such talk as this is not profitable to either of us. It makes you purple in the face, — you *are* apoplectic, you know, — and it spoils good company. Better tell a few fibs about me behind my back, — it will heat you less, and do me more harm. I'll leave you to it; I shall go and have a game at whist with the ladies."

As the door closed behind the questionable Christian, Mr. Scales was in a state of frustration that prevented speech. Every one was rather embarrassed.

"That 's a most uncommon sort o' fellow," said Mr. Crowder, in an undertone, to his next neighbour, the gardener. "Why, Mr. Philip picked him up in foreign parts, did n't he?"

"He was a courier," said the gardener. "He 's had a deal of experience. And I believe, by what I can make out, — for he 's been pretty free with me sometimes, — there was a time when he was in that rank of life that he fought a duel."

"Ah! that makes him such a cool chap," said Mr. Crowder.

"He 's what I call an overbearing fellow," said Mr. Sircome, also *sotto voce*, to his next neighbour, Mr. Filmore, the surgeon's assistant. "He runs you down with a sort of talk that 's neither here nor there. He 's got a deal too many samples in his pocket for me."

"All I know is, he 's a wonderful hand at cards," said Mr. Filmore, whose whiskers and shirt-pin were quite above the average. "I wish I could play *écarté* as he does; it 's beautiful to see him; he can make a man look pretty blue, — he 'll empty his pocket for him in no time."

"That 's none to his credit," said Mr. Sircome.

The conversation had in this way broken up into *tête-à-tête*, and the hilarity of the evening might be considered a failure. Still the punch was drunk, the accounts were duly swelled, and notwithstanding the innovating spirit of the time, Sir Maximus Debarry's establishment was kept up in a sound, hereditary British manner.

CHAPTER VIII

Rumour doth double like the voice and echo.
SHAKESPEARE.

The mind of a man is as a country which was once open to squatters, who have bred and multiplied and become masters of the land. But then happeneth a time when new and hungry comers dispute the land; and there is trial of strength, and the stronger wins. Nevertheless the first squatters be they who have prepared the ground, and the crops to the end will be sequent (though chiefly on the nature of the soil, as of light sand, mixed loam, or heavy clay, yet) somewhat on the primal labour and sowing.

THAT talkative maiden, Rumour, though in the interest of art she is figured as a youthful winged beauty with flowing garments, soaring above the heads of men, and breathing world-thrilling news through a gracefully curved trumpet, is in fact a very old maid, who puckers her silly face by the fireside, and really does no more than chirp a wrong guess or a lame story into the ear of a fellow-gossip; all the rest of the work attributed to her is done by the ordinary working of those passions against which men pray in the Litany, with the help of a plentiful stupidity against which we have never yet had any authorized form of prayer.

When Mr. Scales's strong need to make an impressive figure in conversation, together with his very slight need of any other premise than his own sense of his wide general knowledge and probable infallibility, led him to specify five hundred thousand as the lowest admissible

amount of Harold Transome's commercially acquired fortune, it was not fair to put this down to poor old Miss Rumour, who had only told Scales that the fortune was considerable. And again, when the curt Mr. Sircome found occasion at Treby to mention the five hundred thousand as a fact that folks seemed pretty sure about, this expansion of the butler into "folks" was entirely due to Mr. Sircome's habitual preference for words which could not be laid hold of or give people a handle over him. It was in this simple way that the report of Harold Transome's fortune spread and was magnified, adding much lustre to his opinions in the eyes of Liberals, and compelling even men of the opposite party to admit that it increased his eligibility as a member for North Loamshire. It was observed by a sound thinker in these parts that property was ballast; and when once the aptness of that metaphor had been perceived, it followed that a man was not fit to navigate the sea of politics without a great deal of such ballast; and that, rightly understood, whatever increased the expense of election, inasmuch as it virtually raised the property qualification, was an unspeakable boon to the country.

Meanwhile the fortune that was getting larger in the imagination of constituents was shrinking a little in the imagination of its owner. It was hardly more than a hundred and fifty thousand; and there were not only the heavy mortgages to be paid off, but also a large amount of capital was needed in order to repair the farm-buildings all over the estate, to carry out extensive draining, and make allowances to incoming tenants,

which might remove the difficulty of newly letting the farms in a time of agricultural depression. The farms actually tenanted were held by men who had begged hard to succeed their fathers in getting a little poorer every year, on land which was also getting poorer, where the highest rate of increase was in the arrears of rent, and where the master, in crushed hat and corduroys, looked pitiably lean and care-worn by the side of pauper labourers, who showed that superior assimilating power often observed to attend nourishment by the public money. Mr. Goffe, of Rabbit's End, had never had it explained to him that, according to the true theory of rent, land must inevitably be given up when it would not yield a profit equal to the ordinary rate of interest; so that from want of knowing what was inevitable, and not from a Titanic spirit of opposition, he kept on his land. He often said of himself, with a melancholy wipe of his sleeve across his brow, that he "did n't know which-away to turn;" and he would have been still more at a loss on the subject if he had quitted Rabbit's End with a wagonful of furniture and utensils, a file of receipts, a wife with five children, and a shepherd dog in low spirits.

It took no long time for Harold Transome to discover this state of things, and to see, moreover, that, except on the demesne immediately around the house, the timber had been mismanaged. The woods had been recklessly thinned, and there had been insufficient planting. He had not yet thoroughly investigated the various accounts kept by his mother, by Jermyn, and by Banks the bailiff; but what had been done

with the large sums which had been received for timber was a suspicious mystery to him. He observed that the farm held by Jermyn was in first-rate order, that a good deal had been spent on the buildings, and that the rent had stood unpaid. Mrs. Transome had taken an opportunity of saying that Jermyn had had some of the mortgage-deeds transferred to him, and that his rent was set against so much interest. Harold had only said, in his careless yet decisive way: "Oh, Jermyn be hanged! It seems to me if Durfey had n't died and made room for me, Jermyn would have ended by coming to live here, and you would have had to keep the lodge and open the gate for his carriage. But I shall pay him off — mortgages and all — by and by. I 'll owe him nothing, — not even a curse." Mrs. Transome said no more. Harold did not care to enter fully into the subject with his mother. The fact that she had been active in the management of the estate — had ridden about it continually, had busied herself with accounts, had been head-bailiff of the vacant farms, and had yet allowed things to go wrong — was set down by him simply to the general futility of women's attempts to transact men's business. He did not want to say anything to annoy her; he was only determined to let her understand, as quietly as possible, that she had better cease all interference.

Mrs. Transome did understand this; and it was very little that she dared to say on business, though there was a fierce struggle of her anger and pride with a dread which was nevertheless supreme. As to the old tenants, she only ob-

served, on hearing Harold burst forth about their wretched condition, "that with the estate so burthened, the yearly loss by arrears could better be borne than the outlay and sacrifice necessary in order to let the farms anew."

"I was really capable of calculating, Harold," she ended, with a touch of bitterness. "It seems easy to deal with farmers and their affairs when you only see them in print, I dare say; but it 's not quite so easy when you live among them. You have only to look at Sir Maximus s estate; you will see plenty of the same thing. The times have been dreadful, and old families like to keep their old tenants. But I dare say that is Toryism."

"It 's a hash of odds and ends, if that is Toryism, my dear mother. However, I wish you had kept three more old tenants; for then I should have had three more fifty-pound voters. And, in a hard run, one may be beaten by a head. But," Harold added, smiling, and handing her a ball of worsted which had fallen, "a woman ought to be a Tory, and graceful and handsome like you. I should hate a woman who took up my opinions and talked for me. I 'm an Oriental, you know. I say, mother, shall we have this room furnished with rose-colour? I notice that it suits your bright gray hair."

Harold thought it was only natural that his mother should have been in a sort of subjection to Jermyn throughout the awkward circumstances of the family. It was the way of women, and all weak minds, to think that what they had been used to was inalterable, and any

quarrel with a man who managed private affairs was necessarily a formidable thing. He himself was proceeding very cautiously, and preferred not even to know too much just at present, lest a certain personal antipathy he was conscious of towards Jermyn, and an occasional liability to exasperation should get the better of a calm and clear-sighted resolve not to quarrel with the man while he could be of use. Harold would have been disgusted with himself if he had helped to frustrate his own purpose. And his strongest purpose now was to get returned for Parliament, to make a figure there as a Liberal member, and to become on all grounds a personage of weight in North Loamshire.

How Harold Transome came to be a Liberal in opposition to all the traditions of his family, was a more subtle inquiry than he had ever cared to follow out. The newspapers undertook to explain it. The "North Loamshire Herald" witnessed, with a grief and disgust certain to be shared by all persons who were actuated by wholesome British feeling, an example of defection in the inheritor of a family name which in times past had been associated with attachment to right principle, and with the maintenance of our Constitution in Church and State; and pointed to it as an additional proof that men who had passed any large portion of their lives beyond the limits of our favoured country usually contracted not only a laxity of feeling towards Protestantism, nay, towards religion itself, — a latitudinarian spirit hardly distinguishable from atheism, — but also a levity of disposition, inducing them to tamper with those

institutions by which alone Great Britain had risen to her pre-eminence among the nations. Such men, infected with outlandish habits, intoxicated with vanity, grasping at momentary power by flattery of the multitude, fearless because godless, liberal because un-English, were ready to pull one stone from under another in the national edifice, till the great structure tottered to its fall. On the other hand, the "Duffield Watchman" saw, in this signal instance of self-liberation from the trammels of prejudice, a decisive guarantee of intellectual pre-eminence, united with a generous sensibility to the claims of man as man, which had burst asunder and cast off, by a spontaneous exertion of energy, the cramping, out-worn shell of hereditary bias and class interest.

But these large-minded guides of public opinion argued from wider data than could be furnished by any knowledge of the particular case concerned. Harold Transome was neither the dissolute cosmopolitan so vigorously sketched by the Tory "Herald," nor the intellectual giant and moral lobster suggested by the liberal imagination of the "Watchman." Twenty years ago he had been a bright, active, good-tempered lad, with sharp eyes and a good aim; he delighted in success and in predominance, but he did not long for an impossible predominance, and become sour and sulky because it was impossible. He played at the games he was clever in, and usually won; all other games he let alone, and thought them of little worth. At home and at Eton he had been side by side with his stupid elder brother Durfey, whom he despised; and

he very early began to reflect that since this Caliban in miniature was older than himself, he must carve out his own fortune. That was a nuisance; and on the whole the world seemed rather ill-arranged, at Eton especially, where there were many reasons why Harold made no great figure. He was not sorry the money was wanting to send him to Oxford; he did not see the good of Oxford: he had been surrounded by many things during his short life, of which he had distinctly said to himself that he did not see the good, and he was not disposed to venerate on the strength of any good that others saw. He turned his back on home very cheerfully, though he was rather fond of his mother, and very fond of Transome Court, and the river where he had been used to fish; but he said to himself as he passed the lodge-gates, "I 'll get rich somehow, and have an estate of my own, and do what I like with it." This determined aiming at something not easy but clearly possible marked the direction in which Harold's nature was strong; he had the energetic will and muscle, the self-confidence, the quick perception, and the narrow imagination which make what is admiringly called the practical mind.

Since then his character had been ripened by a various experience, and also by much knowledge which he had set himself deliberately to gain. But the man was no more than the boy writ large, with an extensive commentary. The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs

power of its triumph. And this inclination had helped his shrewdness in forming judgments which were at once innovating and moderate. He was addicted at once to rebellion and to conformity, and only an intimate personal knowledge could enable any one to predict where his conformity would begin. The limit was not defined by theory, but was drawn in an irregular zig-zag by early disposition and association; and his resolution, of which he had never lost hold, to be a thorough Englishman again some day, had kept up the habit of considering all his conclusions with reference to English politics and English social conditions. He meant to stand up for every change that the economical condition of the country required, and he had an angry contempt for men with coronets on their coaches, but too small a share of brains to see when they had better make a virtue of necessity. His respect was rather for men who had no coronets, but who achieved a just influence by furthering all measures which the common-sense of the country and the increasing self-assertion of the majority peremptorily demanded. He could be such a man himself.

In fact, Harold Transome was a clever, frank, good-natured egoist; not stringently consistent, but without any disposition to falsity; proud, but with a pride that was moulded in an individual rather than an hereditary form; unspeculative, unsentimental, unsympathetic; fond of sensual pleasures, but disinclined to all vice, and attached as a healthy, clear-sighted person, to all conventional morality, construed with a certain freedom, like doctrinal articles to which

the public order may require subscription. A character is apt to look but indifferently, written out in this way. Reduced to a map, our premises seem insignificant, but they make, nevertheless, a very pretty freehold to live in and walk over; and so, if Harold Transome had been among your acquaintances, and you had observed his qualities through the medium of his agreeable person, bright smile, and a certain easy charm which accompanies sensuousness when unsullied by coarseness, — through the medium also of the many opportunities in which he would have made himself useful or pleasant to you, — you would have thought him a good fellow, highly acceptable as a guest, a colleague, or a brother-in-law. Whether all mothers would have liked him as a son, is another question.

It is a fact, perhaps kept a little too much in the background, that mothers have a self larger than their maternity, and that when their sons have become taller than themselves, and are gone from them to college or into the world, there are wide spaces of their time which are not filled with praying for their boys, reading old letters, and envying yet blessing those who are attending to their shirt-buttons. Mrs. Transome was certainly not one of those bland, adoring, and gently tearful women. After sharing the common dream that when a beautiful manchild was born to her, her cup of happiness would be full, she had travelled through long years apart from that child to find herself at last in the presence of a son of whom she was afraid, who was utterly unmanageable by her,

and to whose sentiments in any given case she possessed no key. Yet Harold was a kind son: he kissed his mother's brow, offered her his arm, let her choose what she liked for the house and garden, asked her whether she would have bays or grays for her new carriage, and was bent on seeing her make as good a figure in the neighbourhood as any other woman of her rank. She trembled under this kindness: it was not enough to satisfy her; still, if it should ever cease and give place to something else, — she was too uncertain about Harold's feelings to imagine clearly what that something would be. The finest threads, such as no eye sees, if bound cunningly about the sensitive flesh, so that the movement to break them would bring torture, may make a worse bondage than any fetters. Mrs. Transome felt the fatal threads about her, and the bitterness of this helpless bondage mingled itself with the new elegances of the dining and drawing rooms, and all the household changes which Harold had ordered to be brought about with magical quickness. Nothing was as she had once expected it would be. If Harold had shown the least care to have her stay in the room with him, — if he had really cared for her opinion, — if he had been what she had dreamed he would be in the eyes of those people who had made her world, — if all the past could be dissolved, and leave no solid trace of itself, — mighty *ifs* that were all impossible, — she would have tasted some joy; but now she began to look back with regret to the days when she sat in loneliness among the old drapery, and still longed for something that might happen. Yet,

save in a bitter little speech, or in a deep sigh heard by no one besides Denner, she kept all these things hidden in her heart, and went out in the autumn sunshine to overlook the alterations in the pleasure-grounds very much as a happy woman might have done. One day, however, when she was occupied in this way, an occasion came on which she chose to express indirectly a part of her inward care.

She was standing on the broad gravel in the afternoon; the long shadows lay on the grass; the light seemed the more glorious because of the reddened and golden trees. The gardeners were busy at their pleasant work; the newly turned soil gave out an agreeable fragrance; and little Harry was playing with Nimrod round old Mr. Transome, who sat placidly on a low garden-chair. The scene would have made a charming picture of English domestic life; and the handsome, majestic, gray-haired woman (obviously grandmamma) would have been especially admired. But the artist would have felt it requisite to turn her face towards her husband and little grandson, and to have given her an elderly amiability of expression which would have divided remark with his exquisite rendering of her Indian shawl. Mrs. Transome's face was turned the other way, and for this reason she only heard an approaching step, and did not see whose it was; yet it startled her. It was not quick enough to be her son's step; and besides, Harold was away at Duffield. It was Mr. Jermyn's.

CHAPTER IX

A woman, naturally born to fears.
King John.

Methinks
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me; and my inward soul
With nothing trembles.
King Richard II.

MATTHEW JERMYN approached Mrs. Transome, taking off his hat and smiling. She did not smile, but said, —

"You knew Harold was not at home?"

"Yes; I came to see you, to know if you had any wishes that I could further, since I have not had an opportunity of consulting you since he came home."

"Let us walk towards the Rookery then."

They turned together, Mr. Jermyn still keeping his hat off and holding it behind him. The air was so soft and agreeable that Mrs. Transome herself had nothing but a large veil over her head.

They walked for a little while in silence, till they were out of sight, under tall trees, and treading noiselessly on falling leaves. What Jermyn was really most anxious about was to learn from Mrs. Transome whether anything had transpired that was significant of Harold's disposition towards him, which he suspected to be very far from friendly. Jermyn was not naturally flinty-hearted: at five-and-twenty he had

written verses, and had got himself wet through in order not to disappoint a dark-eyed woman whom he was proud to believe in love with him; but a family man with grown-up sons and daughters, a man with a professional position and complicated affairs that make it hard to ascertain the exact relation between property and liabilities, necessarily thinks of himself and what may be impending.

"Harold is remarkably acute and clever," he began at last, since Mrs. Transome did not speak. "If he gets into Parliament, I have no doubt he will distinguish himself. He has a quick eye for business of all kinds."

"That is no comfort to me," said Mrs. Transome. To-day she was more conscious than usual of that bitterness which was always in her mind in Jermyn's presence, but which was carefully suppressed, — suppressed because she could not endure that the degradation she inwardly felt should ever become visible or audible in acts or words of her own, should ever be reflected in any word or look of his. For years there had been a deep silence about the past between them, — on her side, because she remembered; on his, because he more and more forgot.

"I trust he is not unkind to you in any way. I know his opinions pain you; but I trust you find him in everything else disposed to be a good son."

"Oh, to be sure, — good as men are disposed to be to women, giving them cushions and carriages, and recommending them to enjoy themselves, and then expecting them to be contented under contempt and neglect. I

have no power over him, — remember that, — none."

Jermyn turned to look in Mrs. Transome's face: it was long since he had heard her speak to him as if she were losing her self-command.

"Has he shown any unpleasant feeling about your management of the affairs?"

"*My* management of the affairs!" Mrs. Transome said, with concentrated rage, flashing a fierce look at Jermyn. She checked herself; she felt as if she were lighting a torch to flare on her own past folly and misery. It was a resolve which had become a habit, that she would never quarrel with this man, — never tell him what she saw him to be. She had kept her woman's pride and sensibility intact: through all her life there had vibrated the maiden need to have her hand kissed and be the object of chivalry. And so she sank into silence again, trembling.

Jermyn felt annoyed, — nothing more. There was nothing in his mind corresponding to the intricate meshes of sensitiveness in Mrs. Transome's. He was anything but stupid; yet he always blundered when he wanted to be delicate or magnanimous; he constantly sought to soothe others by praising himself. Moral vulgarity cleaved to him like an hereditary odour. He blundered now.

"My dear Mrs. Transome," he said, in a tone of bland kindness, "you are agitated, — you appear angry with me. Yet I think, if you consider, you will see that you have nothing to complain of in me, unless you will complain of the inevitable course of man's life. I have

always met your wishes both in happy circumstances and in unhappy ones. I should be ready to do so now, if it were possible."

Every sentence was as pleasant to her as if it had been cut in her bared arm. Some men's kindness and love-making are more exasperating, more humiliating than others' derision; but the pitiable woman who has once made herself secretly dependent on a man who is beneath her in feeling, must bear that humiliation for fear of worse. Coarse kindness is at least better than coarse anger; and in all private quarrels the duller nature is triumphant by reason of its dulness. Mrs. Transome knew in her inmost soul that those relations which had sealed her lips on Jermyn's conduct in business matters, had been with him a ground for presuming that he should have impunity in any lax dealing into which circumstances had led him. She knew that she herself had endured all the more privation because of his dishonest selfishness. And now, Harold's long-deferred heirship, and his return with startlingly unexpected penetration, activity, and assertion of mastery, had placed them both in the full presence of a difficulty which had been prepared by the years of vague uncertainty as to issues. In this position, with a great dread hanging over her, which Jermyn knew, and ought to have felt that he had caused her, she was inclined to lash him with indignation, to scorch him with the words that were just the fit names for his doings, — inclined all the more when he spoke with an insolent blandness, ignoring all that was truly in her heart. But no sooner did the words " You have brought

it on me" rise within her than she heard within also the retort, "You brought it on yourself." Not for all the world beside could she bear to hear that retort uttered from without. What did she do? With strange sequence to all that rapid tumult, after a few moments' silence she said, in a gentle and almost tremulous voice, —

"Let me take your arm."

He gave it immediately, putting on his hat and wondering. For more than twenty years Mrs. Transome had never chosen to take his arm.

"I have but one thing to ask you. Make me a promise."

"What is it?"

"That you will never quarrel with Harold."

"You must know that it is my wish not to quarrel with him."

"But make a vow, — fix it in your mind as a thing not to be done. Bear anything from him rather than quarrel with him."

"A man can't make a vow not to quarrel," said Jermyn, who was already a little irritated by the implication that Harold might be disposed to use him roughly. "A man's temper may get the better of him at any moment. I am not prepared to bear *anything*."

"Good God!" said Mrs. Transome, taking her hand from his arm, "is it possible you don't feel how horrible it would be?"

As she took away her hand, Jermyn let his arm fall, put both his hands in his pockets, and shrugging his shoulders, said, "I shall use him as he uses me."

Jermyn had turned round his savage side, and

the blandness was out of sight. It was this that had always frightened Mrs. Transome; there was a possibility of fierce insolence in this man who was to pass with those nearest to her as her indebted servant, but whose brand she secretly bore. She was as powerless with him as she was with her son.

This woman, who loved rule, dared not speak another word of attempted persuasion. They were both silent, taking the nearest way into the sunshine again. There was a half-formed wish in both their minds, — even in the mother's, — that Harold Transome had never been born.

"We are working hard for the election," said Jermyn, recovering himself, as they turned into the sunshine again. "I think we shall get him returned, and in that case he will be in high good-humour. Everything will be more propitious than you are apt to think. You must persuade yourself," he added, smiling at her, "that it is better for a man of his position to be in Parliament on the wrong side than not to be in at all."

"Never," said Mrs. Transome. "I am too old to learn to call bitter sweet and sweet bitter. But what I may think or feel is of no consequence now. I am as unnecessary as a chimney ornament."

And in this way they parted on the gravel, in that pretty scene where they had met. Mrs. Transome shivered as she stood alone; all around her, where there had once been brightness and warmth, there were white ashes, and the sunshine looked dreary as it fell on them.

Mr. Jermyn's heaviest reflections in riding

homeward turned on the possibility of incidents between himself and Harold Transome which would have disagreeable results, requiring him to raise money, and perhaps causing scandal, which in its way might also help to create a monetary deficit. A man of sixty, with a wife whose Duffield connections were of the highest respectability, with a family of tall daughters, an expensive establishment, and a large professional business, owed a great deal more to himself as the mainstay of all those solidities, than to feelings and ideas which were quite unsubstantial. There were many unfortunate coincidences which placed Mr. Jermyn in an uncomfortable position just now; he had not been much to blame, he considered; if it had not been for a sudden turn of affairs, no one would have complained. He defied any man to say that he had intended to wrong people; he was able to refund, to make reprisals, if they could be fairly demanded. Only he would certainly have preferred that they should not be demanded.

A German poet was intrusted with a particularly fine sausage, which he was to convey to the donor's friend at Paris. In the course of a long journey he smelt the sausage; he got hungry, and desired to taste it; he pared a morsel off, then another, and another, in successive moments of temptation, till at last the sausage was, humanly speaking, at an end. The offence had not been premeditated. The poet had never loved meanness, but he loved sausage; and the result was undeniably awkward.

So it was with Matthew Jermyn. He was far from liking that ugly abstraction rascality,

but he had liked other things which had suggested nibbling. He had had to do many things in law and in daily life which in the abstract he would have condemned; and indeed he had never been tempted by them in the abstract. Here, in fact, was the inconvenience; he had sinned for the sake of particular concrete things, and particular concrete consequences were likely to follow.

But he was a man of resolution, who, having made out what was the best course to take under a difficulty, went straight to his work. The election must be won: that would put Harold in good-humour, give him something to do, and leave himself more time to prepare for any crisis.

He was in anything but low spirits that evening. It was his eldest daughter's birthday, and the young people had a dance. Papa was delightful, — stood up for a quadrille and a country-dance, told stories at supper, and made humorous quotations from his early readings: if these were Latin, he apologized, and translated to the ladies; so that a deaf lady-visitor from Duffield kept her trumpet up continually, lest she should lose any of Mr. Jermyn's conversation, and wished that her niece Maria had been present, who was young and had a good memory.

Still the party was smaller than usual; for some families in Treby refused to visit Jermyn, now that he was concerned for a Radical candidate.

CHAPTER X

He made love neither with roses, nor with apples, nor with locks of hair. — THEOCRITUS.

ONE Sunday afternoon Felix Holt rapped at the door of Mr. Lyon's house, although he could hear the voice of the minister preaching in the chapel. He stood with a book under his arm, apparently confident that there was some one in the house to open the door for him. In fact, Esther never went to chapel in the afternoon; that "exercise" made her head ache.

In these September weeks Felix had got rather intimate with Mr. Lyon. They shared the same political sympathies; and though, to Liberals who had neither freehold nor copyhold nor leasehold the share in a county election consisted chiefly of that prescriptive amusement of the majority known as "looking on," there was still something to be said on the occasion, if not to be done. Perhaps the most delightful friendships are those in which there is much agreement, much disputation, and yet more personal liking; and the advent of the public-spirited, contradictory, yet affectionate Felix into Treby life had made a welcome epoch to the minister. To talk with this young man, who, though hopeful, had a singularity which some might at once have pronounced heresy, but which Mr. Lyon persisted in regarding as orthodoxy "in the making," was like a good

bite to strong teeth after a too plentiful allowance of spoon meat. To cultivate his society with a view to checking his erratic tendencies was a laudable purpose; but perhaps if Felix had been rapidly subdued and reduced to conformity, little Mr. Lyon would have found the conversation much flatter.

Esther had not seen so much of their new acquaintance as her father had. But she had begun to find him amusing, and also rather irritating to her woman's love of conquest. He always opposed and criticised her; and besides that, he looked at her as if he never saw a single detail about her person, — quite as if she were a middle-aged woman in a cap. She did not believe that he had ever admired her hands, or her long neck, or her graceful movements, which had made all the girls at school call her Calypso (doubtless from their familiarity with "Télémaque"). Felix ought properly to have been a little in love with her, — never mentioning it, of course, because that would have been disagreeable, and his being a regular lover was out of the question. But it was quite clear that instead of feeling any disadvantage on his own side, he held himself to be immeasurably her superior; and, what was worse, Esther had a secret consciousness that he was her superior. She was all the more vexed at the suspicion that he thought slightly of her; and wished in her vexation that she could have found more fault with him, — that she had not been obliged to admire more and more the varying expressions of his open face and his deliciously good-humoured laugh, always loud at a joke against himself. Besides,

she could not help having her curiosity roused by the unusual combinations both in his mind and in his outward position; and she had surprised herself as well as her father one day by suddenly starting up and proposing to walk with him when he was going to pay an afternoon visit to Mrs. Holt, to try and soothe her concerning Felix. "What a mother he has!" she said to herself when they came away again; "but, rude and queer as he is, I cannot say there is anything vulgar about him. Yet — I don't know — if I saw him by the side of a finished gentleman." Esther wished that finished gentleman were among her acquaintances: he would certainly admire her, and make her aware of Felix's inferiority.

On this particular Sunday afternoon, when she heard the knock at the door, she was seated in the kitchen corner between the fire and the window reading "René." Certainly in her well-fitting light-blue dress, — she almost always wore some shade of blue, — with her delicate sandalled slipper stretched towards the fire, her little gold watch, which had cost her nearly a quarter's earnings, visible at her side, her slender fingers playing with a shower of brown curls, and a coronet of shining plaits at the summit of her head, she was a remarkable Cinderella. When the rap came, she coloured, and was going to shut her book and put it out of the way on the window-ledge behind her; but she desisted with a little toss, laid it open on the table beside her, and walked to the outer door, which opened into the kitchen. There was rather a mischievous gleam in her face: the rap was not

a small one; it came probably from a large personage with a vigorous arm.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Lyon," said Felix, taking off his cloth cap, — he resolutely declined the expensive ugliness of a hat, and in a poked cap and without a cravat, made a figure at which his mother cried every Sunday, and thought of with a slow shake of the head at several passages in the minister's prayer.

"Dear me, it is you, Mr. Holt! I fear you will have to wait some time before you can see my father. The sermon is not ended yet, and there will be the hymn and the prayer, and perhaps other things to detain him."

"Well, will you let me sit down in the kitchen? I don't want to be a bore."

"Oh, no," said Esther, with her pretty, light laugh, "I always give you credit for not meaning it. Pray come in, if you don't mind waiting. I was sitting in the kitchen; the kettle is singing quite prettily. It is much nicer than the parlour, — not half so ugly."

"There I agree with you."

"How very extraordinary! But if you prefer the kitchen, and don't want to sit with me, I can go into the parlour."

"I came on purpose to sit with you," said Felix, in his blunt way, "but I thought it likely you might be vexed at seeing me. I wanted to talk to you, but I 've got nothing pleasant to say. As your father would have it, I 'm not given to prophesy smooth things, — to prophesy deceit."

"I understand," said Esther, sitting down. "Pray be seated. You thought I had no afternoon sermon, so you came to give me one."

"Yes," said Felix, seating himself sideways in a chair not far off her, and leaning over the back to look at her with his large clear gray eyes, "and my text is something you said the other day. You said you did n't mind about people having right opinions so that they had good taste. Now I want you to see what shallow stuff that is."

"Oh, I don't doubt it if you say so. I know you are a person of right opinions."

"But by opinions you mean men's thoughts about great subjects, and by taste you mean their thoughts about small ones, — dress, behaviour, amusements, ornaments."

"Well — yes — or rather, their sensibilities about those things."

"It comes to the same thing; thoughts, opinions, knowledge, are only a sensibility to facts and ideas. If I understand a geometrical problem, it is because I have a sensibility to the way in which lines and figures are related to each other; and I want you to see that the creature who has the sensibilities that you call taste, and not the sensibilities that you call opinions, is simply a lower, pettier sort of being, — an insect that notices the shaking of the table, but never notices the thunder."

"Very well, I am an insect; yet I notice that you are thundering at me."

"No, you are not an insect. That is what exasperates me at your making a boast of littleness. You have enough understanding to make it wicked that you should add one more to the women who hinder men's lives from having any nobleness in them."

Esther coloured deeply: she resented this speech, yet she disliked it less than many Felix had addressed to her.

"What is my horrible guilt?" she said, rising and standing, as she was wont, with one foot on the fender, and looking at the fire. If it had been any one but Felix who was near her, it might have occurred to her that this attitude showed her to advantage; but she had only a mortified sense that he was quite indifferent to what others praised her for.

"Why do you read this mawkish stuff on a Sunday, for example?" he said, snatching up "Réné," and running his eye over the pages.

"Why don't you always go to chapel, Mr. Holt, and read Howe's 'Living Temple,' and join the Church?"

"There 's just the difference between us, — I know why I don't do those things. I distinctly see that I can do something better. I have other principles, and should sink myself by doing what I don't recognize as the best."

"I understand," said Esther, as lightly as she could, to conceal her bitterness. "I am a lower kind of being, and could not so easily sink myself."

"Not by entering into your father's ideas. If a woman really believes herself to be a lower kind of being, she should place herself in subjection; she should be ruled by the thoughts of her father or husband. If not, let her show her power of choosing something better. You must know that your father's principles are greater and worthier than what guides your life. You have no reason but idle fancy and selfish in-

clination for shirking his teaching and giving your soul up to trifles."

"You are kind enough to say so. But I am not aware that I have ever confided my reasons to you."

"Why, what worth calling a reason could make any mortal hang over this trash? — idiotic immorality dressed up to look fine, with a little bit of doctrine tacked to it, like a hare's foot on a dish, to make believe the mess is not cat's flesh. Look here! 'Est-ce ma faute, si je trouve partout les bornes, si ce qui est fini n'a pour moi aucune valeur?' Yes, sir, distinctly your fault, because you 're an ass. Your dunce who can't do his sums always has a taste for the infinite. Sir, do you know what a rhomboid is? Oh, no, I don't value these things with limits. 'Cependant, j'aime la monotonie des sentimens de la vie, et si j'avais encore la folie de croire au bonheur — '"

"Oh, pray, Mr. Holt, don't go on reading with that dreadful accent; it sets one's teeth on edge." Esther, smarting helplessly under the previous lashes, was relieved by this diversion of criticism.

"There it is!" said Felix, throwing the book on the table, and getting up to walk about. "You are only happy when you can spy a tag or a tassel loose to turn the talk, and get rid of any judgment that must carry grave action after it."

"I think I have borne a great deal of talk without turning it."

"Not enough, Miss Lyon, — not all that I came to say. I want you to change. Of course

I am a brute to say so. I ought to say you are perfect. Another man would, perhaps. But I say I want you to change."

"How am I to oblige you? By joining the Church?"

"No; but by asking yourself whether life is not as solemn a thing as your father takes it to be, — in which you may be either a blessing or a curse to many. You know you have never done that. You don't care to be better than a bird trimming its feathers, and pecking about after what pleases it. You are discontented with the world because you can't get just the small things that suit your pleasure, not because it 's a world where myriads of men and women are ground by wrong and misery, and tainted with pollution."

Esther felt her heart swelling with mingled indignation at this liberty, wounded pride at this depreciation, and acute consciousness that she could not contradict what Felix said. He was outrageously ill-bred; but she felt that she should be lowering herself by telling him so, and manifesting her anger; in that way she would be confirming his accusation of a littleness that shrank from severe truth; and, besides, through all her mortification there pierced a sense that this exasperation of Felix against her was more complimentary than anything in his previous behaviour. She had self-command enough to speak with her usual silvery voice.

"Pray go on, Mr. Holt. Relieve yourself of these burning truths. I am sure they must be troublesome to carry unuttered."

"Yes, they are," said Felix, pausing, and stand-

ing not far off her. "I can't bear to see you going the way of the foolish women who spoil men's lives. Men can't help loving them, and so they make themselves slaves to the petty desires of petty creatures. That's the way those who might do better spend their lives for nought, — get checked in every great effort, — toil with brain and limb for things that have no more to do with a manly life than tarts and confectionery. That's what makes women a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness. That's why I'll never love, if I can help it; and if I love, I'll bear it, and never marry."

The tumult of feeling in Esther's mind — mortification, anger, the sense of a terrible power over her that Felix seemed to have as his angry words vibrated through her — was getting almost too much for her self-control. She felt her lips quivering; but her pride, which feared nothing so much as the betrayal of her emotion, helped her to a desperate effort. She pinched her own hand hard to overcome her tremor, and said, in a tone of scorn, —

"I ought to be very much obliged to you for giving me your confidence so freely."

"Ah! now you are offended with me, and disgusted with me. I expected it would be so. A woman does n't like a man who tells her the truth."

"I think you boast a little too much of your truth-telling, Mr. Holt," said Esther, flashing out at last. "That virtue is apt to be easy to people when they only wound others and not themselves. Telling the truth often means no more than taking a liberty."

"Yes, I suppose I should have been taking a liberty if I had tried to drag you back by the skirt when I saw you running into a pit."

"You should really found a sect. Preaching is your vocation. It is a pity you should ever have an audience of only one."

"I see; I have made a fool of myself. I thought you had a more generous mind, — that you might be kindled to a better ambition. But I 've set your vanity aflame, — nothing else. I 'm going. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Esther, not looking at him. He did not open the door immediately. He seemed to be adjusting his cap and pulling it down. Esther longed to be able to throw a lasso round him and compel him to stay, that she might say what she chose to him; her very anger made this departure irritating, especially as he had the last word, and that a very bitter one. But soon the latch was lifted, and the door closed behind him. She ran up to her bedroom and burst into tears. Poor maiden! There was a strange contradiction of impulses in her mind in those first moments. She could not bear that Felix should not respect her, yet she could not bear that he should see her bend before his denunciation. She revolted against his assumption of superiority, yet she felt herself in a new kind of subjection to him. He was ill-bred, he was rude, he had taken an unwarrantable liberty; yet his indignant words were a tribute to her: he thought she was worth more pains than the women of whom he took no notice. It was excessively impertinent in him to tell her of his resolving not to love, — not to

marry, — as if she cared about that; as if he thought himself likely to inspire an affection that would incline any woman to marry him after such eccentric steps as he had taken. Had he ever for a moment imagined that she had thought of him in the light of a man who would make love to her? . . . But did he love her one little bit, and was that the reason why he wanted her to change? Esther felt less angry at that form of freedom; though she was quite sure that she did not love him, and that she could never love any one who was so much of a pedagogue and a master, to say nothing of his oddities. But he wanted her to change. For the first time in her life Esther felt herself seriously shaken in her self-contentment. She knew there was a mind to which she appeared trivial, narrow, selfish. Every word Felix had said to her seemed to have burned itself into her memory. She felt as if she should forevermore be haunted by self-criticism, and never do anything to satisfy those fancies on which she had simply piqued herself before without being dogged by inward questions. Her father's desire for her conversion had never moved her; she saw that he adored her all the while, and he never checked her unregenerate acts as if they degraded her on earth, but only mourned over them as unfitting her for heaven. Unfitness for heaven (spoken of as "Jerusalem" and "glory"); the prayers of a good little father, whose thoughts and motives seemed to her like the "Life of Dr. Doddridge," which she was content to leave unread, — did not attack her self-respect and self-satisfaction. But now she

had been stung, — stung even into a new consciousness concerning her father. Was it true that his life was so much worthier than her own ? She could not change for anything Felix said, but she told herself he was mistaken if he supposed her incapable of generous thoughts.

She heard her father coming into the house. She dried her tears, tried to recover herself hurriedly, and went down to him.

" You want your tea, father ; how your forehead burns ! " she said gently, kissing his brow, and then putting her cool hand on it.

Mr. Lyon felt a little surprise ; such spontaneous tenderness was not quite common with her ; it reminded him of her mother.

" My sweet child," he said gratefully, thinking with wonder of the treasures still left in our fallen nature.

CHAPTER XI

Truth is the precious harvest of the earth.
But once, when harvest waved upon a land,
The noisome cankerworm and caterpillar,
Locusts, and all the swarming foul-born broods,
Fastened upon it with swift, greedy jaws,
And turned the harvest into pestilence,
Until men said, What profits it to sow?

FELIX was going to Sproxton that Sunday afternoon. He always enjoyed his walk to that outlying hamlet; it took him (by a short cut) through a corner of Sir Maximus Debarry's park; then across a piece of common, broken here and there into red ridges below dark masses of furze; and for the rest of the way alongside the canal, where the Sunday peacefulness that seemed to rest on the bordering meadows and pastures was hardly broken if a horse pulled into sight along the towing-path, and a boat, with a little curl of blue smoke issuing from its tin chimney, came slowly gliding behind. Felix retained something of his boyish impression that the days in a canal-boat were all like Sundays; but the horse, if it had been put to him, would probably have preferred a more Judaic or Scotch rigour with regard to canal-boats, or at least that the Sunday towing should be done by asses, as a lower order.

This canal was only a branch of the grand trunk, and ended among the coal-pits, where Felix, crossing a network of black tramroads,

soon came to his destination, — that public institute of Sproxton, known to its frequenters chiefly as Chubb's, but less familiarly as the Sugar Loaf, or the New Pits; this last being the name for the more modern and lively nucleus of the Sproxton hamlet. The other nucleus, known as the Old Pits, also supported its "public," but it had something of the forlorn air of an abandoned capital; and the company at the Blue Cow was of an inferior kind, — equal, of course, in the fundamental attributes of humanity, such as desire for beer, but not equal in ability to pay for it.

When Felix arrived, the great Chubb was standing at the door. Mr. Chubb was a remarkable publican; none of your stock Bonifaces, red, bloated, jolly, and joking. He was thin and sallow, and was never, as his constant guests observed, seen to be the worse (or the better) for liquor; indeed, as among soldiers an eminent general was held to have a charmed life, Chubb was held by the members of the Benefit Club to have a charmed sobriety, a vigilance over his own interest that resisted all narcotics. His very dreams, as stated by himself, had a method in them beyond the waking thoughts of other men. Pharaoh's dream, he observed, was nothing to them; and, as lying so much out of ordinary experience, they were held particularly suitable for narration on Sunday evenings, when the listening colliers, well washed and in their best coats, shook their heads with a sense of that peculiar edification which belongs to the inexplicable. Mr. Chubb's reasons for becoming landlord of the Sugar Loaf

were founded on the severest calculation. Having an active mind, and being averse to bodily labour, he had thoroughly considered what calling would yield him the best livelihood with the least possible exertion, and in that sort of line he had seen that a "public" amongst miners who earned high wages was a fine opening. He had prospered according to the merits of such judicious calculation, was already a forty-shilling freeholder, and was conscious of a vote for the county. He was not one of those mean-spirited men who found the franchise embarrassing, and would rather have been without it: he regarded his vote as part of his investment, and meant to make the best of it. He called himself a straightforward man, and at suitable moments expressed his views freely; in fact, he was known to have one fundamental division for all opinion, — "my idee" and "humbug."

When Felix approached, Mr. Chubb was standing, as usual, with his hands nervously busy in his pockets, his eyes glancing round with a detective expression at the black landscape, and his lipless mouth compressed, yet in constant movement. On a superficial view it might be supposed that so eager-seeming a personality was unsuited to the publican's business; but in fact it was a great provocative to drinking. Like the shrill, biting talk of a vixenish wife, it would have compelled you to "take a little something" by way of dulling your sensibility.

Hitherto, notwithstanding Felix drank so little ale, the publican had treated him with high civility. The coming election was a great opportunity for applying his political "idee,"

which was that society existed for the sake of the individual, and that the name of that individual was Chubb. Now, from a conjunction of absurd circumstances inconsistent with that idea, it happened that Sproxton had been hitherto somewhat neglected in the canvass. The head member of the Company that worked the mines was Mr. Peter Garstin, and the same company received the rent for the Sugar Loaf. Hence, as the person who had the most power of annoying Mr. Chubb, and being of detriment to him, Mr. Garstin was naturally the candidate for whom he had reserved his vote. But where there is this intention of ultimately gratifying a gentleman by voting for him in an open British manner on the day of the poll, a man, whether Publican or Pharisee (Mr. Chubb used this generic classification of mankind as one that was sanctioned by Scripture), is all the freer in his relations with those deluded persons who take him for what he is not, and imagine him to be a waverer. But for some time opportunity had seemed barren. There were but three dubious votes besides Mr. Chubb's in the small district of which the Sugar Loaf could be regarded as the centre of intelligence and inspiration: the colliers, of course, had no votes, and did not need political conversion; consequently, the interests of Sproxton had only been tacitly cherished in the breasts of candidates. But ever since it had been known that a Radical candidate was in the field, that in consequence of this Mr. Debarry had coalesced with Mr. Garstin, and that Sir James Clement, the poor baronet, had retired, Mr. Chubb had been oc-

cupied with the most ingenious mental combinations in order to ascertain what possibilities of profit to the Sugar Loaf might lie in this altered state of the canvass.

He had a cousin in another county, also a publican, but in a larger way, and resident in a borough, and from him Mr. Chubb had gathered more detailed political information than he could find in the Loamshire newspapers. He was now enlightened enough to know that there was a way of using voteless miners and navvies at Nominations and Elections. He approved of that; it entered into his political "idee;" and indeed he would have been for extending the franchise to this class, — at least in Sproxton. If any one had observed that you must draw a line somewhere, Mr. Chubb would have concurred at once, and would have given permission to draw it at a radius of two miles from his own tap.

From the first Sunday evening when Felix had appeared at the Sugar Loaf, Mr. Chubb had made up his mind that this 'cute man who kept himself sober was an electioneering agent. That he was hired for some purpose or other, there was not a doubt; a man did n't come and drink nothing without a good reason. In proportion as Felix's purpose was not obvious to Chubb's mind, it must be deep; and this growing conviction had even led the publican on the last Sunday evening privately to urge his mysterious visitor to let a little ale be chalked up for him, — it was of no consequence. Felix knew his man, and had taken care not to betray too soon that his real object was so to win the ear

of the best fellows about him as to induce them to meet him on a Saturday evening in the room where Mr. Lyon, or one of his deacons, habitually held his Wednesday preachings. Only women and children, three old men, a journeyman tailor, and a consumptive youth, attended those preachings; not a collier had been won from the strong ale of the Sugar Loaf, not even a navvy from the muddier drink of the Blue Cow. Felix was sanguine; he saw some pleasant faces among the miners when they were washed on Sundays; they might be taught to spend their wages better. At all events he was going to try: he had great confidence in his powers of appeal, and it was quite true that he never spoke without arresting attention. There was nothing better than a dame school in the hamlet; he thought that if he could move the fathers, whose blackened week-day persons and flannel caps, ornamented with tallow candles by way of plume, were a badge of hard labour for which he had a more sympathetic fibre than for any ribbon in the button-hole, — if he could move these men to save something from their drink and pay a school-master for their boys, — a greater service would be done them than if Mr. Garstin and his company were persuaded to establish a school.

"I 'll lay hold of them by their fatherhood," said Felix; "I 'll take one of their little fellows and set him in the midst. Till they can show there 's something they love better than swilling themselves with ale, extension of the suffrage can never mean anything for them but extension of boozing. One must begin some-

where : I 'll begin at what is under my nose. I 'll begin at Sproxton. That 's what a man would do if he had a red-hot superstition. Can't one work for sober truth as hard as for megrims ? "

Felix Holt had his illusions, like other young men, though they were not of a fashionable sort ; referring neither to the impression his costume and horsemanship might make on beholders, nor to the ease with which he would pay the Jews when he gave a loose to his talents and applied himself to work. He had fixed his choice on a certain Mike Brindle (not that Brindle was his real name, — each collier had his *sobriquet*) as the man whom he would induce to walk part of the way home with him this very evening, and get to invite some of his comrades for the next Saturday. Brindle was one of the head miners ; he had a bright good natured face, and had given especial attention to certain performances with a magnet which Felix carried in his pocket.

Mr. Chubb, who had also his illusions, smiled graciously as the enigmatic customer came up to the door-step.

" Well, sir, Sunday seems to be your day ; I begin to look for you on a Sunday now."

" Yes, I 'm a working-man ; Sunday is my holiday," said Felix, pausing at the door since the host seemed to expect this.

" Ah, sir, there 's many ways of working. I look at it you 're one of those as work with your brains. That 's what I do myself."

" One may do a good deal of that and work with one's hands too."

"Ah, sir," said Mr. Chubb, with a certain bitterness in his smile, "I 've that sort of head that I 've often wished I was stupider. I use things up, sir; I see into things a deal too quick. I eat my dinner, as you may say, at breakfast-time. That 's why I hardly ever smoke a pipe. No sooner do I stick a pipe in my mouth than I puff and puff till it 's gone before other folks' are well lit; and then, where am I? I might as well have let it alone. In this world it 's better not to be too quick. But you know what it is, sir."

"Not I," said Felix, rubbing the back of his head, with a grimace. "I generally feel myself rather a blockhead. The world 's a largish place, and I have n't turned everything inside out yet."

"Ah, that 's your deepness. I think we understand one another. And about this here election, I lay two to one we should agree if we was to come to talk about it."

"Ah!" said Felix, with an air of caution.

"You 're none of a Tory, eh, sir? You won't go to vote for Debarry? That was what I said at the very first go-off. Says I, he 's no Tory. I think I was right, sir, — eh?"

"Certainly; I 'm no Tory."

"No, no, you don 't catch me wrong in a hurry. Well, between you and me, I care no more for the Debarrys than I care for Johnny Groats. I live on none o' their land, and not a pot's-worth did they ever send to the Sugar Loaf. I 'm not frightened at the Debarrys; there 's no man more independent than me. I 'll pump or I 'll split for them as treat me

the handsomest and are the most of what I call gentlemen; that 's my idee. And in the way of hacting for any man, them are fools that don't employ me."

We mortals sometimes cut a pitiable figure in our attempts at display. We may be sure of our own merits, yet fatally ignorant of the point of view from which we are regarded by our neighbour. Our fine patterns in tattooing may be far from throwing him into a swoon of admiration, though we turn ourselves all round to show them. Thus it was with Mr. Chubb.

"Yes," said Felix, dryly; "I should think there are some sorts of work for which you are just fitted."

"Ah, you see that? Well, we understand one another. You 're no Tory; no more am I. And if I 'd got four hands to show at a nomination, the Debarrys should n't have one of 'em. My idee is, there 's a deal too much of their scutchins and their moniments in Treby Church. What 's their scutchins mean? They 're a sign with little liquor behind 'em; that 's how I take it. There 's nobody can give account of 'em as I ever heard."

Mr. Chubb was hindered from further explaining his views as to the historical element in society by the arrival of new guests, who approached in two groups. The foremost group consisted of well-known colliers, in their good Sunday beavers and coloured handkerchiefs serving as cravats, with the long ends floating. The second group was a more unusual one, and caused Mr. Chubb to compress his mouth and

agitate the muscles about it in rather an excited manner.

First came a smartly dressed personage on horseback, with a conspicuous expansive shirt-front and figured satin stock. He was a stout man, and gave a strong sense of broadcloth. A wild idea shot through Mr. Chubb's brain: could this grand visitor be Harold Transome? Excuse him: he had been given to understand by his cousin from the distant borough that a Radical candidate in the condescension of canvassing had even gone the length of eating bread-and-treacle with the children of an honest freeman, and declaring his preference for that simple fare. Mr. Chubb's notion of a Radical was that he was a new and agreeable kind of lickspittle who fawned on the poor instead of on the rich, and so was likely to send customers to a "public;" so that he argued well enough from the premises at his command.

The mounted man of broadcloth had followers, — several shabby-looking men, and Sproxton boys of all sizes, whose curiosity had been stimulated by unexpected largesse. A stranger on horseback scattering halfpence on a Sunday was so unprecedented that there was no knowing what he might do next; and the smallest hindmost fellows in sealskin caps were not without hope that an entirely new order of things had set in.

Every one waited outside for the stranger to dismount, and Mr. Chubb advanced to take the bridle.

"Well, Mr. Chubb," were the first words when the great man was safely out of the sad-

dle, "I 've often heard of your fine tap, and I 'm come to taste it."

"Walk in, sir, — pray walk in," said Mr. Chubb, giving the horse to the stable-boy. "I shall be proud to draw for you. If anybody's been praising me, I think my ale will back him."

All entered in the rear of the stranger except the boys, who peeped in at the window.

"Won't you please to walk into the parlour, sir?" said Chubb, obsequiously.

"No, no, I 'll sit down here. This is what I like to see," said the stranger, looking round at the colliers, who eyed him rather shyly, — "a bright hearth where working-men can enjoy themselves. However, I 'll step into the other room for three minutes, just to speak half-a-dozen words with you."

Mr. Chubb threw open the parlour door, and then stepping back, took the opportunity of saying in a low tone to Felix, "Do you know this gentleman?"

"Not I ; no."

Mr. Chubb's opinion of Felix Holt sank from that moment. The parlour door was closed, but no one sat down or ordered beer.

"I say, master," said Mike Brindle, going up to Felix, "don't you think that 's one o' the 'lection men?"

"Very likely."

"I heared a chap say they 're up and down everywhere," said Brindle ; "and now 's the time, they say, when a man can get beer for nothing."

"Ay, that 's sin' the Reform," said a big,

red-whiskered man, called Dredge. "That 's brought the 'lections and the drink into these parts; for afore that, it was all kep' up the Lord knows wheer."

"Well, but the Reform 's niver come anigh Sprox'on," said a gray-haired but stalwart man called Old Sleck. "I don't believe nothing about 'n, I don't."

"Don't you?" said Brindle, with some contempt. "Well, I do. There 's folks won't believe beyond the end o' their own pickaxes. You can't drive nothing into 'em, not if you split their skulls. I know for certain sure, from a chap in the cartin' way, as he 's got money and drink too, only for hollering. Eh, master, what do *you* say?" Brindle ended, turning with some deference to Felix.

"Should you like to know all about the Reform?" said Felix, using his opportunity. "If you would, I can tell you."

"Ay, ay, — tell 's; you know, I 'll be bound," said several voices at once.

"Ah, but it will take some little time. And we must be quiet. The cleverest of you — those who are looked up to in the Club — must come and meet me at Peggy Button's cottage next Saturday, at seven o'clock, after dark. And, Brindle, you must bring that little yellow-haired lad of yours. And anybody that 's got a little boy — a very little fellow, who won't understand what is said — may bring him. But you must keep it close, you know. We don't want fools there. But everybody who hears me may come. I shall be at Peggy Button's."

"Why, that 's where the Wednesday preachin'

is," said Dredge. "I 've been a-forced to give my wife a black eye to hinder her from going to the preachin'. Lors-a-massy, she thinks she knows better nor me, and I can't make head nor tail of her talk."

"Why can't you let the woman alone?" said Brindle, with some disgust. "I 'd be ashamed to beat a poor crawling thing 'cause she likes preaching."

"No more I did beat her afore, not if she scrat' me," said Dredge, in vindication; "but if she jabbers at me, I can't abide it. Howsomever, I 'll bring my Jack to Peggy's o' Saturday. His mother shall wash him. He is but four year old, and he 'll swear and square at me a good un, if I set him on."

"There you go blatherin'," said Brindle, intending a mild rebuke.

This dialogue, which was in danger of becoming too personal, was interrupted by the reopening of the parlour door, and the reappearance of the impressive stranger with Mr. Chubb, whose countenance seemed unusually radiant.

"Sit you down here, Mr. Johnson," said Chubb, moving an arm-chair. "This gentleman is kind enough to treat the company," he added, looking round, "and what 's more, he 'll take a cup with 'em; and I think there 's no man but what 'll say that 's a honour."

The company had nothing equivalent to a "Hear! hear!" at command; but they perhaps felt the more, as they seated themselves with an expectation unvented by utterance. There was a general satisfactory sense that the hitherto shadowy Reform had at length come to Sprox-

ton in a good round shape, with broadcloth and pockets. Felix did not intend to accept the treating; but he chose to stay and hear, taking his pint as usual.

"Capital ale, capital ale!" said Mr. Johnson, as he set down his glass, speaking in a quick, smooth treble. "Now," he went on, with a certain pathos in his voice, looking at Mr. Chubb, who sat opposite, "there 's some satisfaction to me in finding an establishment like this at the Pits. For what would higher wages do for the working-man if he could n't get a good article for his money? Why, gentlemen," — here he looked round, — "I 've been into alehouses where I 've seen a fine fellow of a miner or a stone-cutter come in and have to lay down money for beer that I should be sorry to give to my pigs!" Here Mr. Johnson leaned forward with squared elbows, hands placed on his knees, and a defiant shake of the head.

"Aw, like at the Blue Cow," fell in the irrepressible Dredge, in a deep bass; but he was rebuked by a severe nudge from Brindle.

"Yes, yes, you know what it is, my friend," said Mr. Johnson, looking at Dredge, and restoring his self-satisfaction. "But it won't last much longer; that 's one good thing. Bad liquor will be swept away with other bad articles. Trade will prosper, — and what 's trade now without steam, and what is steam without coal? And mark you this, gentlemen, — there 's no man and no government can make coal."

A brief, loud "Haw, haw!" showed that this fact was appreciated.

"Nor freeston', nayther," said a wide-mouthed

wiry man called Gills, who wished for an exhaustive treatment of the subject, being a stone-cutter.

"Nor freestone, as you say; else, I think, if coal could be made above ground, honest fellows who are the pith of our population would not have to bend their backs and sweat in a pit six days out of the seven. No, no: I say, as this country prospers it has more and more need of you, sirs. It can do without a pack of lazy lords and ladies, but it can never do without brave colliers. And the country *will* prosper. I pledge you my word, sirs, this country will rise to the tip-top of everything, and there is n't a man in it but what shall have his joint in the pot, and his spare money jingling in his pocket, if we only exert ourselves to send the right men to Parliament, — men who will speak up for the collier and the stone-cutter and the navvy "(Mr. Johnson waved his hand liberally), "and will stand no nonsense. This is a crisis, and we must exert ourselves. We 've got Reform, gentlemen, but now the thing is to make Reform work. It 's a crisis, — I pledge you my word, it 's a crisis."

Mr. Johnson threw himself back as if from the concussion of that great noun. He did not suppose that one of his audience knew what a crisis meant; but he had large experience in the effect of uncomprehended words; and in this case the colliers were thrown into a state of conviction concerning they did not know what, which was a fine preparation for "hitting out," or any other act carrying a due sequence to such a conviction.

Felix felt himself in danger of getting into a rage. There is hardly any mental misery worse than that of having our own serious phrases, our own rooted beliefs, caricatured by a charlatan or a hireling. He began to feel the sharp lower edge of his tin pint-measure, and to think it a tempting missile.

Mr. Johnson certainly had some qualifications as an orator. After this impressive pause he leaned forward again, and said, in a lowered tone, looking round, —

"I think you all know the good news."

There was a movement of shoe-soles on the quarried floor, and a scrape of some chair-legs, but no other answer.

"The good news I mean is that a first-rate man, Mr. Transome of Transome Court, has offered himself to represent you in Parliament, sirs. I say you in particular, for what he has at heart is the welfare of the working-man, — of the brave fellows that wield the pickaxe and the saw and the hammer. He 's rich, — has more money than Garstin, — but he does n't want to keep it to himself. What he wants is to make a good use of it, gentlemen. He 's come back from foreign parts with his pockets full of gold. He could buy up the Debarrys if they were worth buying, but he 's got something better to do with his money. He means to use it for the good of the working-men in these parts. I know there are some men who put up for Parliament and talk a little too big. They may say they want to befriend the colliers, for example. But I should like to put a question to them. I should like to ask them, 'What colliers?'

There are colliers up at Newcastle, and there are colliers down in Wales. Will it do any good to honest Tom, who is hungry in Sproxton, to hear that Jack at Newcastle has his bellyful of beef and pudding?"

"It ought to do him good," Felix burst in, with his loud abrupt voice, in odd contrast with glib Mr. Johnson's. "If he knows it 's a bad thing to be hungry and not have enough to eat, he ought to be glad that another fellow, who is not idle, is not suffering in the same way."

Every one was startled. The audience was much impressed with the grandeur, the knowledge, and the power of Mr. Johnson. His brilliant promises confirmed the impression that Reform had at length reached the New Pits; and Reform, if it were good for anything, must at last resolve itself into spare money, — meaning "sport" and drink, and keeping away from work for several days in the week. These "brave" men of Sproxton liked Felix as one of themselves, only much more knowing, — as a working-man who had seen many distant parts, but who must be very poor, since he never drank more than a pint or so. They were quite inclined to hear what he had got to say on another occasion, but they were rather irritated by his interruption at the present moment. Mr. Johnson was annoyed, but he spoke with the same glib quietness as before, though with an expression of contempt: —

"I call it a poor-spirited thing to take up a man's straightforward words and twist them. What I meant to say was plain enough, — that

no man can be saved from starving by looking on while others eat. I think that 's common-sense, eh, sirs ? "

There was again an approving " Haw, haw ! " To hear anything said, and understand it, was a stimulus that had the effect of wit. Mr. Chubb cast a suspicious and viperous glance at Felix, who felt that he had been a simpleton for his pains.

" Well, then," continued Mr. Johnson, " I suppose I may go on. But if there is any one here better able to inform the company than I am, I give way, I give way."

" Sir," said Mr. Chubb, magisterially, " no man shall take the words out of *your* mouth in this house. And," he added, looking pointedly at Felix, " company that 's got no more orders to give, and wants to turn up rusty to them that has, had better be making room than filling it. Love an' 'armony's the word on our Club's flag, an' love an' 'armony 's the meaning of ' The Sugar Loaf, William Chubb.' Folks of a different mind had better seek another house of call."

" Very good," said Felix, laying down his money and taking his cap ; " I 'm going." He saw clearly enough that if he said more, there would be a disturbance which could have no desirable end.

When the door had closed behind him, Mr. Johnson said, " What is that person's name ? "

" Does anybody know it ? " said Mr. Chubb.

A few noes were heard.

" I 've heard him speak like a downright Reformer, else I should have looked a little sharper

after him. But you may see he 's nothing partic'lar."

"It looks rather bad that no one knows his name," said Mr. Johnson. "He 's most likely a Tory in disguise, — a Tory spy. You must be careful, sirs, of men who come to you and say they 're Radicals, and yet do nothing for you. They 'll stuff you with words, — no lack of words, — but words are wind. Now, a man like Transome comes forward and says to the working-men of this country: 'Here I am, ready to serve you and to speak for you in Parliament, and to get the laws made all right for you; and in the mean while, if there 's any of you who are my neighbours who want a day's holiday, or a cup to drink with friends, or a copy of the King's likeness, — why, I 'm your man. I 'm not a paper handbill, — all words and no substance, — nor a man with land and nothing else; I 've got bags of gold as well as land.' I think you know what I mean by the King's likeness?"

Here Mr. Johnson took a half-crown out of his pocket and held the head towards the company.

"Well, sirs, there are some men who like to keep this pretty picture a great deal too much to themselves. I don't know whether I 'm right, but I think I 've heard of such a one not a hundred miles from here. I think his name was Spratt, and he managed some company's coal-pits."

"Haw, haw! Spratt, — Spratt 's his name," was rolled forth to an accompaniment of scraping shoe-soles.

"A screwing fellow, by what I understand, —

a domineering fellow, — who would expect men to do as he liked without paying them for it. I think there 's not an honest man who would n't like to disappoint such an upstart."

There was a murmur which was interpreted by Mr. Chubb: "I 'll answer for 'em, sir."

"Now, listen to me. Here 's Garstin: he 's one of the Company you work under. What 's Garstin to you? Who sees him? and when they do see him they see a thin miserly fellow who keeps his pockets buttoned. He calls himself a Whig, yet he 'll split votes with a Tory, — he 'll drive with the Debarrys. Now, gentlemen, if I said I 'd got a vote, and anybody asked me what I should do with it, I should say, 'I 'll plump for Transome.' You 've got no votes, and that 's a shame. But you *will* have some day, if such men as Transome are returned; and then you 'll be on a level with the first gentleman in the land, and if he wants to sit in Parliament, he must take off his hat and ask your leave. But though you have n't got a vote you can give a cheer for the right man, and Transome 's not a man like Garstin; if you lost a day's wages by giving a cheer for Transome, he 'll make you amends. That 's the way a man who has no vote can yet serve himself and his country; he can lift up his hand and shout, 'Transome forever!' — 'Hurray for Transome!' Let the workingmen, — let colliers and navvies and stone-cutters, who between you and me have a good deal too much the worst of it, as things are now, — let them join together and give their hands and voices for the right man, and they 'll make the great people shake in their shoes a little;

and when you shout for Transome, remember you shout for more wages, and more of your rights, and you shout to get rid of rats and *sprats* and such small animals, who are the tools the rich make use of to squeeze the blood out of the poor man."

"I wish there'd be a row, — I'd pommel him," said Dredge, who was generally felt to be speaking to the question.

"No, no, my friend, — there you're a little wrong. No pommelling, — no striking first. There you have the law and the constable against you. A little rolling in the dust and knocking hats off, a little pelting with soft things that'll stick and not bruise, — all that does n't spoil the fun. If a man is to speak when you don't like to hear him, it is but fair you should give him something he does n't like in return. And the same if he's got a vote and does n't use it for the good of the country; I see no harm in splitting his coat in a quiet way. A man must be taught what's right if he does n't know it. But no kicks, no knocking down, no pommelling."

"It 'ud be good fun, though, if so-*be*," said Old Sleck, allowing himself an imaginative pleasure.

"Well, well, if a Spratt wants you to say Garstin, it's some pleasure to think you can say Transome. Now, my notion is this. You are men who can put two and two together, — I don't know a more solid lot of fellows than you are; and what I say is, let the honest men in this country who've got no vote show themselves in a body when they have the chance.

Why, sirs, for every Tory sneak that 's got a vote, there 's fifty-five fellows who must stand by and be expected to hold their tongues. But I say, let 'em hiss the sneaks, let 'em groan at the sneaks, and the sneaks will be ashamed of themselves. The men who 've got votes don't know how to use them. There 's many a fool with a vote, who is not sure in his mind whether he shall poll, say for Debarry or Garstin or Transome, — whether he 'll plump or whether he 'll split; a straw will turn him. Let him know your mind if he does n't know his own. What 's the reason Debarry gets returned? Because people are frightened at the Debarrys. What 's that to you? You don't care for the Debarrys. If people are frightened at the Tories, we 'll turn round and frighten *them.* You know what a Tory is, — one who wants to drive the working-men as he 'd drive cattle. That 's what a Tory is; and a Whig is no better, if he 's like Garstin. A Whig wants to knock the Tory down and get the whip; that 's all. But Transome 's neither Whig nor Tory; he 's the working-man's friend, the collier's friend, the friend of the honest navvy. And if he gets into Parliament, let me tell you, it will be the better for you. I don't say it will be the better for overlookers and screws and rats and *sprats;* but it will be the better for every good fellow who takes his pot at the Sugar Loaf."

Mr. Johnson's exertions for the political education of the Sproxton men did not stop here; which was the more disinterested in him as he did not expect to see them again, and could only set on foot an organization by which their in-

struction could be continued without him. In this he was quite successful. A man known among the "butties" as Pack, who had already been mentioned by Mr. Chubb, presently joined the party, and had a private audience of Mr. Johnson, that he might be instituted as the "shepherd" of this new flock.

"That's a right-down genelman," said Pack, as he took the seat vacated by the orator, who had ridden away.

"What's his trade, think you?" said Gills, the wiry stone-cutter.

"Trade?" said Mr. Chubb. "He's one of the top-sawyers of the country. He works with his head, you may see that."

"Let's have our pipes, then," said Old Sleck; "I'm pretty well tired o' jaw."

"So am I," said Dredge. "It's wriggling work, — like follering a stoat. It makes a man dry. I'd as lief hear preaching, on'y there's nought to be got by't. I should n't know which end I stood on if it was n't for the tickets and the treatin'."

CHAPTER XII

"Oh, sir, 't was that mixture of spite and over-fed merriment which passes for humour with the vulgar. In their fun they have much resemblance to a turkey-cock. It has a cruel beak, and a silly iteration of ugly sounds; it spreads its tail in self-glorification, but shows you the wrong side of that ornament, — liking admiration, but knowing not what is admirable."

THIS Sunday evening, which promised to be so memorable in the experience of the Sproxton miners, had its drama also for those unsatisfactory objects to Mr. Johnson's moral sense, the Debarrys. Certain incidents occurring at Treby Manor caused an excitement there which spread from the dining-room to the stables; but no one underwent such agitating transitions of feeling as Mr. Scales. At six o'clock that superior butler was chuckling in triumph at having played a fine and original practical joke on his rival Mr. Christian. Some two hours after that time, he was frightened, sorry, and even meek; he was on the brink of a humiliating confession; his cheeks were almost livid; his hair was flattened for want of due attention from his fingers; and the fine roll of his whiskers, which was too firm to give way, seemed only a sad reminiscence of past splendour and felicity. His sorrow came about in this wise.

After service on that Sunday morning, Mr. Philip Debarry had left the rest of the family to go home in the carriage, and had remained at the Rectory to lunch with his uncle Augustus, that he might consult him touching some letters

of importance. He had returned the letters to his pocket-book, but had not returned the book to his pocket, and he finally walked away leaving the enclosure of private papers and bank-notes on his uncle's escritoire. After his arrival at home he was reminded of his omission, and immediately despatched Christian with a note begging his uncle to seal up the pocket-book and send it by the bearer. This commission, which was given between three and four o'clock, happened to be very unwelcome to the courier. The fact was that Mr. Christian, who had been remarkable through life for that power of adapting himself to circumstances which enables a man to fall safely on all-fours in the most hurried expulsions and escapes, was not exempt from bodily suffering, — a circumstance to which there is no known way of adapting one's self so as to be perfectly comfortable under it, or to push it off on to other people's shoulders. He did what he could ; he took doses of opium when he had an access of nervous pains, and he consoled himself as to future possibilities by thinking that if the pains ever became intolerably frequent a considerable increase in the dose might put an end to them altogether. He was neither Cato nor Hamlet, and though he had learned their soliloquies at his first boarding-school, he would probably have increased his dose without reciting those masterpieces. Next to the pain itself he disliked that any one should know of it ; defective health diminished a man's market value ; he did not like to be the object of the sort of pity he himself gave to a poor devil who was forced to make a wry face or " give in " altogether.

He had felt it expedient to take a slight dose this afternoon, and still he was not altogether relieved at the time he set off to the Rectory. On returning with the valuable case safely deposited in his hind pocket, he felt increasing bodily uneasiness, and took another dose. Thinking it likely that he looked rather pitiable, he chose not to proceed to the house by the carriage-road. The servants often walked in the park on a Sunday, and he wished to avoid any meeting. He would make a circuit, get into the house privately, and after delivering his packet to Mr. Debarry, shut himself up till the ringing of the half-hour bell. But when he reached an elbowed seat under some sycamores, he felt so ill at ease that he yielded to the temptation of throwing himself on it to rest a little. He looked at his watch; it was but five; he had done his errand quickly hitherto, and Mr. Debarry had not urged haste. But in less than ten minutes he was in a sound sleep. Certain conditions of his system had determined a stronger effect than usual from the opium.

As he had expected, there were servants strolling in the park, but they did not all choose the most frequented part. Mr. Scales, in pursuit of a slight flirtation with the younger lady's-maid, had preferred a more sequestered walk in the company of that agreeable nymph. And it happened to be this pair, of all others, who alighted on the sleeping Christian, — a sight which at the very first moment caused Mr. Scales a vague pleasure as at an incident that must lead to something clever on his part. To play a trick, and make some one or other look foolish, was

held the most pointed form of wit throughout the back regions of the Manor, and served as a constant substitute for theatrical entertainment; what the farce wanted in costume or "make-up" it gained in the reality of the mortification which excited the general laughter. And lo! here was the offensive, the exasperatingly cool and superior Christian caught comparatively helpless, with his head hanging on his shoulder, and one coat-tail hanging out heavily below the elbow of the rustic seat. It was this coat-tail which served as a suggestion to Mr. Scales's genius. Putting his finger up in warning to Mrs. Cherry, and saying, "Hush, be quiet! I see a fine bit of fun," he took a knife from his pocket, stepped behind the unconscious Christian, and quickly cut off the pendent coat-tail. Scales knew nothing of the errand to the Rectory; and as he noticed that there was something in the pocket, thought it was probably a large cigar-case. So much the better, — he had no time to pause. He threw the coat-tail as far as he could, and noticed that it fell among the elms under which they had been walking. Then, beckoning to Mrs. Cherry, he hurried away with her towards the more open part of the park, not daring to explode in laughter until it was safe from the chance of waking the sleeper. And then the vision of the graceful, well-appointed Mr. Christian, who sneered at Scales about his "get up," having to walk back to the house with only one tail to his coat, was a source of so much enjoyment to the butler that the fair Cherry began to be quite jealous of the joke. Still she admitted that it really was funny,

tittered intermittently, and pledged herself to secrecy. Mr. Scales explained to her that Christian would try to creep in unobserved, but that this must be made impossible; and he requested her to imagine the figure this interloping fellow would cut when everybody was asking what had happened. "Hallo, Christian! where 's your coat-tail?" would become a proverb at the Manor, where jokes kept remarkably well without the aid of salt; and Mr. Christian's comb would be cut so effectually that it would take a long time to grow again. Exit Scales, laughing, and presenting a fine example of dramatic irony to any one in the secret of Fate.

When Christian awoke, he was shocked to find himself in the twilight. He started up, shook himself, missed something, and soon became aware what it was he missed. He did not doubt that he had been robbed, and he at once foresaw that the consequences would be highly unpleasant. In no way could the cause of the accident be so represented to Mr. Philip Debarry as to prevent him from viewing his hitherto unimpeachable factotum in a new and unfavourable light. And though Mr. Christian did not regard his present position as brilliant, he did not see his way to anything better. A man nearly fifty who is not always quite well is seldom ardently hopeful; he is aware that this is a world in which merit is often overlooked. With the idea of robbery in full possession of his mind, to peer about and search in the dimness, even if it had occurred to him, would have seemed a preposterous waste of time and energy. He knew it was likely that Mr. De-

barry's pocket-book had important and valuable contents, and that he should deepen his offence by deferring his announcement of the unfortunate fact. He hastened back to the house, relieved by the obscurity from that mortification of his vanity on which the butler had counted. Indeed, to Scales himself the affair had already begun to appear less thoroughly jocose than he had anticipated. For he observed that Christian's non-appearance before dinner had caused Mr. Debarry some consternation ; and he had gathered that the courier had been sent on a commission to the Rectory. " My uncle must have detained him for some reason or other," he heard Mr. Philip say ; " but it is odd. If he were less trusty about commissions, or had ever seemed to drink too much, I should be uneasy." Altogether the affair was not taking the turn Mr. Scales had intended. At last, when dinner had been removed, and the butler's chief duties were at an end, it was understood that Christian had entered without his coat-tail, looking serious and even agitated ; that he had asked leave at once to speak to Mr. Debarry ; and that he was even then in parley with the gentlemen in the dining-room. Scales was in alarm ; it must have been some property of Mr. Debarry's that had weighted the pocket. He took a lantern, got a groom to accompany him with another lantern, and with the utmost practicable speed reached the fatal spot in the park. He searched under the elms, — he was certain that the pocket had fallen there, — and he found the pocket ; but he found it empty, and in spite of further search, did not find the contents, though

he had at first consoled himself with thinking that they had fallen out, and would be lying not far off. He returned with the lantern and the coat-tail, and a most uncomfortable consciousness in that great seat of a butler's emotion, the stomach. He had no sooner re-entered than he was met by Mrs. Cherry, pale and anxious, who drew him aside to say that if he did n't tell everything she would; that the constables were to be sent for; that there had been no end of bank-notes and letters and things in Mr. Debarry's pocket-book, which Christian was carrying in that very pocket Scales had cut off; that the Rector was sent for, the constable was coming, and they should all be hanged. Mr. Scales's own intellect was anything but clear as to the possible issues. Crestfallen, and with the coat-tail in his hands as an attestation that he was innocent of anything more than a joke, he went and made his confession. His story relieved Christian a little, but did not relieve Mr. Debarry, who was more annoyed at the loss of the letters, and the chance of their getting into hands that might make use of them, than at the loss of the bank-notes. Nothing could be done for the present, but that the Rector, who was a magistrate, should instruct the constables, and that the spot in the park indicated by Scales should again be carefully searched. This was done, but in vain; and many of the family at the Manor had disturbed sleep that night.

CHAPTER XIII

Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me
To this submission.

Richard II.

MEANWHILE Felix Holt had been making his way back from Sproxton to Treby in some irritation and bitterness of spirit. For a little while he walked slowly along the direct road, hoping that Mr. Johnson would overtake him, in which case he would have the pleasure of quarrelling with him, and telling him what he thought of his intentions in coming to cant at the Sugar Loaf. But he presently checked himself in this folly, and turned off again towards the canal, that he might avoid the temptation of getting into a passion to no purpose.

"Where 's the good," he thought, "of pulling at such a tangled skein as this electioneering trickery? As long as three-fourths of the men in this country see nothing in an election but self-interest, and nothing in self-interest but some form of greed, one might as well try to purify the proceedings of the fishes, and say to a hungry codfish, — 'My good friend, abstain; don't goggle your eyes so, or show such a stupid gluttonous mouth, or think the little fishes are worth nothing except in relation to your own inside.' He 'd be open to no argument short of crimping him. I should get into a rage with this fellow, and perhaps end by thrashing him.

'There 's some reason in me as long as I keep my temper, but my rash humour is drunkenness without wine. I should n't wonder if he upsets all my plans with these colliers. Of course he 's going to treat them for the sake of getting up a posse at the nomination and speechifyings. They 'll drink double, and never come near me on a Saturday evening. I don't know what sort of man Transome really is. It 's no use my speaking to anybody else, but if I could get at him, he might put a veto on this thing. Though, when once the men have been promised and set a-going, the mischief is likely to be past mending. Hang the Liberal codfish! I should n't have minded so much if he 'd been a Tory!"

Felix went along in the twilight, struggling in this way with the intricacies of life, which would certainly be greatly simplified if corrupt practices were the invariable mark of wrong opinions. When he had crossed the common and had entered the park, the overshadowing trees deepened the gray gloom of the evening; it was useless to try and keep the blind path, and he could only be careful that his steps should be bent in the direction of the park-gate. He was striding along rapidly now, whistling "Bannockburn" in a subdued way as an accompaniment to his inward discussion, when something smooth and soft on which his foot alighted arrested him with an unpleasant startling sensation, and made him stoop to examine the object he was treading on. He found it to be a large leather pocket-book swelled by its contents, and fastened with a sealed ribbon as well as a clasp. In stooping he saw about a

yard off something whitish and square lying on the dark grass. This was an ornamental note-book of pale leather stamped with gold. Apparently it had burst open in falling, and out of the pocket, formed by the cover, there protruded a small gold chain about four inches long, with various seals and other trifles attached to it by a ring at the end. Felix thrust the chain back, and finding that the clasp of the note-book was broken, he closed it and thrust it into his side pocket, walking along under some annoyance that fortune had made him the finder of articles belonging most probably to one of the family at Treby Manor. He was much too proud a man to like any contact with the aristocracy, and he could still less endure coming within speech of their servants. Some plan must be devised by which he could avoid carrying these things up to the Manor himself: he thought at first of leaving them at the lodge, but he had a scruple against placing property, of which the ownership was after all uncertain, in the hands of persons unknown to him. It was possible that the large pocket-book contained papers of high importance, and that it did not belong to any of the Debarry family. He resolved at last to carry his findings to Mr. Lyon, who would perhaps be good-natured enough to save him from the necessary transactions with the people at the Manor by undertaking those transactions himself. With this determination he walked straight to Malthouse Yard, and waited outside the chapel until the congregation was dispersing, when he passed along the aisle to the vestry in order to speak to the minister in private.

But Mr. Lyon was not alone when Felix entered. Mr. Nuttwood, the grocer, who was one of the deacons, was complaining to him about the obstinate demeanour of the singers, who had declined to change the tunes in accordance with a change in the selection of hymns, and had stretched short metre into long out of pure wilfulness and defiance, irreverently adapting the most sacred monosyllables to a multitude of wandering quavers, arranged, it was to be feared, by some musician who was inspired by conceit rather than by the true spirit of psalmody.

"Come in, my friend," said Mr. Lyon, smiling at Felix, and then continuing in a faint voice, while he wiped the perspiration from his brow and bald crown: "Brother Nuttwood, we must be content to carry a thorn in our sides while the necessities of our imperfect state demand that there should be a body set apart and called a choir, whose special office it is to lead the singing, not because they are more disposed to the devout uplifting of praise, but because they are endowed with better vocal organs, and have attained more of the musician's art. For all office, unless it be accompanied by peculiar grace, becomes as it were a diseased organ, seeking to make itself too much of a centre. Singers, specially so called, are, it must be confessed, an anomaly among us who seek to reduce the Church to its primitive simplicity, and to cast away all that may obstruct the direct communion of spirit with spirit."

"They are so headstrong," said Mr. Nuttwood, in a tone of sad perplexity, "that if we

dealt not warily with them, they might end in dividing the church, even now that we have had the chapel enlarged. Brother Kemp would side with them, and draw the half part of the members after him. I cannot but think it a snare when a professing Christian has a bass voice like Brother Kemp's. It makes him desire to be heard of men; but the weaker song of the humble may have more power in the ear of God."

"Do you think it any better vanity to flatter yourself that God likes to hear you, though men don't?" said Felix, with unwarrantable bluntness.

The civil grocer was prepared to be scandalized by anything that came from Felix. In common with many hearers in Malthouse Yard, he already felt an objection to a young man who was notorious for having interfered in a question of wholesale and retail, which should have been left to Providence. Old Mr. Holt, being a church member, had probably had "leadings" which were more to be relied on than his son's boasted knowledge. In any case a little visceral disturbance and inward chastisement to the consumers of questionable medicines would tend less to obscure the divine glory than a show of punctilious morality in one who was not a "professor." Besides, how was it to be known that the medicines would not be blessed, if taken with due trust in a higher influence? A Christian must consider not the medicines alone in their relation to our frail bodies (which are dust), but the medicines with Omnipotence behind them. Hence a pious vendor will look for

"leadings," and he is likely to find them in the cessation of demand and the disproportion of expenses and returns. The grocer was thus on his guard against the presumptuous disputant.

"Mr. Lyon may understand you, sir," he replied. "He seems to be fond of your conversation. But you have too much of the pride of human learning for me. I follow no new lights."

"Then follow an old one," said Felix, mischievously disposed towards a sleek tradesman. "Follow the light of the old-fashioned Presbyterians that I 've heard sing at Glasgow. The preacher gives out the psalm, and then everybody sings a different tune, as it happens to turn up in their throats. It 's a domineering thing to set a tune and expect everybody else to follow it. It 's a denial of private judgment."

"Hush, hush, my young friend," said Mr. Lyon, hurt by this levity, which glanced at himself as well as at the deacon. "Play not with paradoxes. That caustic which you handle in order to scorch others, may happen to sear your own fingers and make them dead to the quality of things. 'T is difficult enough to see our way and keep our torch steady in this dim labyrinth; to whirl the torch and dazzle the eyes of our fellow-seekers is a poor daring, and may end in total darkness. You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not to wander in mere lawlessness. Wherefore, I beseech you, seem not to say that liberty is license. And I apprehend, — though I am not endowed with

an ear to seize those earthly harmonies, which to some devout souls have seemed as it were the broken echoes of the heavenly choir, — I apprehend that there is a law in music, disobedience whereunto would bring us in our singing to the level of shrieking maniacs or howling beasts ; so that herein we are well instructed how true liberty can be nought but the transfer of obedience from the will of one or of a few men to that will which is the norm or rule for all men. And though the transfer may sometimes be but an erroneous direction of search, yet is the search good and necessary to the ultimate finding. And even as in music, where all obey and concur to one end, so that each has the joy of contributing to a whole whereby he is ravished and lifted up into the courts of heaven, so will it be in that crowning time of the millennial reign, when our daily prayer will be fulfilled, and one law shall be written on all hearts, and be the very structure of all thought, and be the principle of all action."

Tired, even exhausted, as the minister had been when Felix Holt entered, the gathering excitement of speech gave more and more energy to his voice and manner ; he walked away from the vestry table, he paused and came back to it ; he walked away again, then came back, and ended with his deepest-toned largo, keeping his hands clasped behind him, while his brown eyes were bright with the lasting youthfulness of enthusiastic thought and love. But to any one who had no share in the energies that were thrilling his little body, he would

have looked queer enough. No sooner had he finished his eager speech than he held out his hand to the deacon, and said, in his former faint tone of fatigue, —

"God be with you, brother. We shall meet to-morrow, and we will see what can be done to subdue these refractory spirits."

When the deacon was gone, Felix said, "Forgive me, Mr. Lyon ; I was wrong, and you are right."

"Yes, yes, my friend ; you have that mark of grace within you, that you are ready to acknowledge the justice of a rebuke. Sit down ; you have something to say, — some packet there."

They sat down at a corner of the small table, and Felix drew the note-book from his pocket to lay it down with the pocket-book, saying, —

"I 've had the ill-luck to be the finder of these things in the Debarrys' Park. Most likely they belong to one of the family at the Manor, or to some grandee who is staying there. I hate having anything to do with such people. They 'll think me a poor rascal, and offer me money. You are a known man, and I thought you would be kind enough to relieve me by taking charge of these things, and writing to Debarry, not mentioning me, and asking him to send some one for them. I found them on the grass in the park this evening about half-past seven, in the corner we cross going to Sproxton."

"Stay," said Mr. Lyon, "this little book is open ; we may venture to look in it for some sign of ownership. There be others who possess property, and might be crossing that end of the park, besides the Debarrys."

As he lifted the note-book close to his eyes, the chain again slipped out. He arrested it and held it in his hand, while he examined some writing, which appeared to be a name on the inner leather. He looked long, as if he were trying to decipher something that was partly rubbed out; and his hands began to tremble noticeably. He made a movement in an agitated manner, as if he were going to examine the chain and seals, which he held in his hand. But he checked himself, closed his hand again, and rested it on the table, while with the other hand he pressed the sides of the note-book together.

Felix observed his agitation, and was much surprised; but with a delicacy of which he was capable under all his abruptness, he said, "You are overcome with fatigue, sir. I was thoughtless to tease you with these matters at the end of Sunday, when you have been preaching three sermons."

Mr. Lyon did not speak for a few moments, but at last he said, —

"It is true. I am overcome. It was a name I saw, — a name that called up a past sorrow. Fear not; I will do what is needful with these things. You may trust them to me."

With trembling fingers he replaced the chain, and tied both the large pocket-book and the note-book in his handkerchief. He was evidently making a great effort over himself. But when he had gathered the knot of the handkerchief in his hand, he said, —

"Give me your arm to the door, my friend. I feel ill. Doubtless I am over-wearied."

The door was already open, and Lyddy was

watching for her master's return. Felix therefore said good-night and passed on, sure that this was what Mr. Lyon would prefer. The minister's supper of warm porridge was ready by the kitchen fire, where he always took it on a Sunday evening, and afterwards smoked his weekly pipe up the broad chimney, — the one great relaxation he allowed himself. Smoking, he considered, was a recreation of the travailed spirit, which, if indulged in, might endear this world to us by the ignoble bonds of mere sensuous ease. Daily smoking might be lawful, but it was not expedient. And in this Esther concurred with a doctrinal eagerness that was unusual in her. It was her habit to go to her own room, professedly to bed, very early on Sundays, — immediately on her return from chapel, — that she might avoid her father's pipe. But this evening she had remained at home, under a true plea of not feeling well; and when she heard him enter, she ran out of the parlour to meet him.

"Father, you are ill," she said, as he tottered to the wicker-bottomed arm-chair, while Lyddy stood by, shaking her head.

"No, my dear," he answered feebly, as she took off his hat and looked in his face inquiringly; "I am weary."

"Let me lay these things down for you," said Esther, touching the bundle in the handkerchief.

"No; they are matters which I have to examine," he said, laying them on the table, and putting his arm across them. "Go you to bed, Lyddy."

"Not me, sir. If ever a man looked as if he was struck with death, it 's you, this very night as here is."

"Nonsense, Lyddy!" said Esther, angrily. "Go to bed when my father desires it. I will stay with him."

Lyddy was electrified by surprise at this new behaviour of Miss Esther's. She took her candle silently and went.

"Go you too, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, tenderly, giving his hand to Esther, when Lyddy was gone. "It is your wont to go early. Why are you up?"

"Let me lift your porridge from before the fire, and stay with you, father. You think I 'm so naughty that I don't like doing anything for you," said Esther, smiling rather sadly at him.

"Child, what has happened? You have become the image of your mother to-night," said the minister, in a loud whisper. The tears came and relieved him; while Esther, who had stooped to lift the porridge from the fender, paused on one knee and looked up at him.

"She was very good to you?" asked Esther, softly.

"Yes, dear. She did not reject my affection. She thought not scorn of my love. She would have forgiven me, if I had erred against her, from very tenderness. Could you forgive me, child?"

"Father, I have not been good to you; but I will be, I will be," said Esther, laying her head on his knee.

He kissed her head. "Go to bed, my dear; I would be alone."

When Esther was lying down that night, she felt as if the little incidents between herself and her father on this Sunday had made it an epoch. Very slight words and deeds may have a sacramental efficacy, if we can cast our self-love behind us in order to say or do them. And it has been well believed through many ages that the beginning of compunction is the beginning of a new life ; that the mind which sees itself blameless may be called dead in trespasses, — in trespasses on the love of others, in trespasses on their weakness, in trespasses on all those great claims which are the image of our own need.

But Esther persisted in assuring herself that she was not bending to any criticism from Felix. She was full of resentment against his rudeness, and yet more against his too harsh conception of her character. She was determined to keep as much at a distance from him as possible.

CHAPTER XIV

> This man's metallic; at a sudden blow
> His soul rings hard. I cannot lay my palm,
> Trembling with life, upon that jointed brass.
> I shudder at the cold, unanswering touch;
> But if it press me in response, I 'm bruised.

THE next morning, when the Debarrys, including the Rector, who had ridden over to the Manor early, were still seated at breakfast, Christian came in with a letter, saying that it had been brought by a man employed at the chapel in Malthouse Yard, who had been ordered by the minister to use all speed and care in the delivery.

The letter was addressed to Sir Maximus.

"Stay, Christian, it may possibly refer to the lost pocket-book," said Philip Debarry, who was beginning to feel rather sorry for his factotum, as a reaction from previous suspicions and indignation.

Sir Maximus opened the letter and felt for his glasses, but then said, "Here, you read it, Phil; the man writes a hand like small print."

Philip cast his eyes over it, and then read aloud in a tone of satisfaction: —

> Sir, — I send this letter to apprise you that I have now in my possession certain articles which last evening, at about half-past seven o'clock, were found lying on the grass at the western extremity of your park. The articles are, 1°, a well-filled pocket-book, of brown leather, fastened with a black ribbon and with a seal of red wax; 2°, a small note-book, covered with gilded vellum, whereof the clasp was burst, and from out whereof had partly es-

caped a small gold chain, with seals and a locket attached, the locket bearing on the back a device, and round the face a female name.

Wherefore I request that you will further my effort to place these articles in the right hands, by ascertaining whether any person within your walls claims them as his property, and by sending that person to me (if such be found); for I will on no account let them pass from my care save into that of one who, declaring himself to be the owner, can state to me what is the impression on the seal, and what the device and name upon the locket.

I am, Sir, yours to command in all right dealing,

RUFUS LYON.

MALTHOUSE YARD, Oct. 3, 1832.

"Well done, old Lyon," said the Rector; "I did n't think that any composition of his would ever give me so much pleasure."

"What an old fox it is!" said Sir Maximus. "Why could n't he send the things to me at once along with the letter?"

"No, no, Max; he uses a justifiable caution," said the Rector, a refined and rather severe likeness of his brother, with a ring of fearlessness and decision in his voice which startled all flaccid men and unruly boys. "What are you going to do, Phil?" he added, seeing his nephew rise.

"To write, of course. Those other matters are yours, I suppose?" said Mr. Debarry, looking at Christian.

"Yes, sir."

"I shall send you with a letter to the preacher. You can describe your own property. And the seal, uncle, — was it your coat-of-arms?"

"No, it was the head of Achilles. Here, I can take it off the ring, and you can carry it,

Christian. But don't lose that, for I 've had it ever since eighteen hundred. I should like to send my compliments with it," the Rector went on, looking at his brother, " and beg that since he has so much wise caution at command, he would exercise a little in more public matters, instead of making himself a firebrand in my parish, and teaching hucksters and tape-weavers that it 's their business to dictate to statesmen."

" How did Dissenters and Methodists and Quakers and people of that sort first come up, uncle ? " said Miss Selina, a radiant girl of twenty, who had given much time to the harp.

" Dear me, Selina," said her elder sister, Harriet, whose forte was general knowledge, " don't you remember ' Woodstock ' ? They were in Cromwell's time."

" Oh ! Holdenough, and those people ? Yes ; but they preached in the churches ; they had no chapels. Tell me, Uncle Gus ; I like to be wise," said Selina, looking up at the face which was smiling down on her with a sort of severe benignity. " Phil says I 'm an ignorant puss."

" The seeds of Nonconformity were sown at the Reformation, my dear, when some obstinate men made scruples about surplices and the place of the communion-table, and other trifles of that sort. But the Quakers came up about Cromwell's time, and the Methodists only in the last century. The first Methodists were regular clergymen, the more 's the pity."

" But all those wrong things, — why did n't government put them down ? "

"Ah, to be sure!" fell in Sir Maximus, in a cordial tone of corroboration.

"Because error is often strong, and government is often weak, my dear. Well, Phil, have you finished your letter?"

"Yes, I will read it to you," said Philip, turning and leaning over the back of his chair with the letter in his hand.

There is a portrait of Mr. Philip Debarry still to be seen at Treby Manor, and a very fine bust of him at Rome, where he died fifteen years later, a convert to Catholicism. His face would have been plain but for the exquisite setting of his hazel eyes, which fascinated even the dogs of the household. The other features, though slight and irregular, were redeemed from triviality by the stamp of gravity and intellectual preoccupation in his face and bearing. As he read aloud, his voice was what his uncle's might have been if it had been modulated by delicate health and a visitation of self-doubt.

Sir, — In reply to the letter with which you have favoured me this morning, I beg to state that the articles you describe were lost from the pocket of my servant, who is the bearer of this letter to you, and is the claimant of the vellum note-book and the gold chain. The large leathern pocket-book is my own property, and the impression on the wax, a helmeted head of Achilles, was made by my uncle, the Rev. Augustus Debarry, who allows me to forward his seal to you in proof that I am not making a mistaken claim.

I feel myself under deep obligation to you, sir, for the care and trouble you have taken in order to restore to its right owner a piece of property which happens to be of particular importance to me. And I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a

satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct.

I remain, Sir, your obliged and faithful servant,

PHILIP DEBARRY.

"You know best, Phil, of course," said Sir Maximus, pushing his plate from him by way of interjection. "But it seems to me you exaggerate preposterously every little service a man happens to do for you. Why should you make a general offer of that sort? How do you know what he will be asking you to do? Stuff and nonsense! Tell Willis to send him a few head of game. You should think twice before you give a blank check of that sort to one of these quibbling, meddlesome Radicals."

"You are afraid of my committing myself to 'the bottomless perjury of an et cetera,'" said Philip, smiling, as he turned to fold his letter. "But I think I am not doing any mischief; at all events, I could not be content to say less. And I have a notion that he would regard a present of game just now as an insult. I should, in his place."

"Yes, yes, you; but you don't make yourself a measure of Dissenting preachers, I hope," said Sir Maximus, rather wrathfully. "What do *you* say, Gus?"

"Phil is right," said the Rector, in an absolute tone. "I would not deal with a Dissenter, or put profits into the pocket of a Radical which I might put into the pocket of a good Churchman and a quiet subject. But if the greatest scoundrel in the world made way for me, or picked my hat up, I would thank him. So would you, Max."

"Pooh! I did n't mean that one should n't behave like a gentleman," said Sir Maximus, in some vexation. He had great pride in his son's superiority even to himself; but he did not enjoy having his own opinion argued down as it always was, and did not quite trust the dim vision opened by Phil's new words and new notions. He could only submit in silence while the letter was delivered to Christian, with the order to start for Malthouse Yard immediately.

Meanwhile, in that somewhat dim locality the possible claimant of the note-book and the chain was thought of and expected with palpitating agitation. Mr. Lyon was seated in his study, looking haggard and already aged from a sleepless night. He was so afraid lest his emotion should deprive him of the presence of mind necessary to the due attention to particulars in the coming interview, that he continued to occupy his sight and touch with the objects which had stirred the depths, not only of memory, but of dread. Once again he unlocked a small box which stood beside his desk, and took from it a little oval locket, and compared this with one which hung with the seals on the stray gold chain. There was the same device in enamel on the back of both, — clasped hands surrounded with blue flowers. Both had round the face a name in gold italics on a blue ground: the name on the locket taken from the drawer was *Maurice;* the name on the locket which hung with the seals was *Annette*, and within the circle of this name there was a lover's knot of light-brown hair, which matched a curl that lay in the box. The hair in the locket which bore the name of

Maurice was of a very dark brown, and before returning it to the drawer Mr. Lyon noted the colour and quality of this hair more carefully than ever. Then he recurred to the note-book: undoubtedly there had been something, probably a third name, beyond the names *Maurice Christian*, which had themselves been rubbed and slightly smeared as if by accident; and from the very first examination in the vestry, Mr. Lyon could not prevent himself from transferring the mental image of the third name in faint lines to the rubbed leather. The leaves of the note-book seemed to have been recently inserted; they were of fresh white paper, and only bore some abbreviations in pencil with a notation of small sums. Nothing could be gathered from the comparison of the writing in the book with that of the yellow letters which lay in the box: the smeared name had been carefully printed, and so bore no resemblance to the signature of those letters; and the pencil abbreviations and figures had been made too hurriedly to bear any decisive witness. "I will ask him to write, — to write a description of the locket," had been one of Mr. Lyon's thoughts; but he faltered in that intention. His power of fulfilling it must depend on what he saw in this visitor, of whose coming he had a horrible dread, at the very time he was writing to demand it. In that demand he was obeying the voice of his rigid conscience, which had never left him perfectly at rest under his one act of deception, — the concealment from Esther that he was not her natural father, the assertion of a false claim upon her. "Let my path be henceforth simple," he had said to

himself in the anguish of that night; "let me seek to know what is, and if possible to declare it." If he was really going to find himself face to face with the man who had been Annette's husband, and who was Esther's father, — if that wandering of his from the light had brought the punishment of a blind sacrilege as the issue of a conscious transgression, — he prayed that he might be able to accept all consequences of pain to himself. But he saw other possibilities concerning the claimant of the book and chain. His ignorance and suspicions as to the history and character of Annette's husband made it credible that he had laid a plan for convincing her of his death as a means of freeing himself from a burthensome tie; but it seemed equally probable that he was really dead, and that these articles of property had been a bequest or a payment or even a sale to their present owner. Indeed, in all these years there was no knowing into how many hands such pretty trifles might have passed. And the claimant might, after all, have no connection with the Debarrys; he might not come on this day or the next. There might be more time left for reflection and prayer.

All these possibilities, which would remove the pressing need for difficult action, Mr. Lyon represented to himself, but he had no effective belief in them; his belief went with his strongest feeling, and in these moments his strongest feeling was dread. He trembled under the weight that seemed already added to his own sin; he felt himself already confronted by Annette's husband and Esther's father. Perhaps the father was a gentleman on a visit to the Debarrys.

There was no hindering the pang with which the old man said to himself, —

"The child will not be sorry to leave this poor home, and I shall be guilty in her sight."

He was walking about among the rows of books when there came a loud rap at the outer door. The rap shook him so that he sank into his chair, feeling almost powerless. Lyddy presented herself.

"Here 's ever such a fine man from the Manor wants to see you, sir. Dear heart, dear heart! shall I tell him you 're too bad to see him?"

"Show him up," said Mr. Lyon, making an effort to rally. When Christian appeared, the minister half rose, leaning on an arm of his chair, and said, "Be seated, sir," seeing nothing but that a tall man was entering.

"I 've brought you a letter from Mr. Debarry," said Christian, in an off-hand manner. This rusty little man, in his dismal chamber, seemed to the Ulysses of the steward's room a pitiable sort of human curiosity, to whom a man of the world would speak rather loudly, in accommodation to an eccentricity which was likely to be accompanied with deafness. One cannot be eminent in everything; and if Mr. Christian had dispersed his faculties in study that would have enabled him to share unconventional points of view, he might have worn a mistaken kind of boot, and been less competent to win at *écarté* or at betting or in any other contest suitable to a person of figure.

As he seated himself, Mr. Lyon opened the letter, and held it close to his eyes, so that his

face was hidden. But at the word "servant" he could not avoid starting, and looking off the letter towards the bearer. Christian, knowing what was in the letter, conjectured that the old man was amazed to learn that so distinguished-looking a personage was a servant; he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, balanced his cane on his fingers, and began a whispering whistle. The minister checked himself, finishing the reading of the letter, and then slowly and nervously put on his spectacles to survey this man, between whose fate and his own there might be a terrible collision. The word "servant" had been a fresh caution to him. He must do nothing rashly. Esther's lot was deeply concerned.

"Here is the seal mentioned in the letter," said Christian.

Mr. Lyon drew the pocket-book from his desk, and after comparing the seal with the impression, said, "It is right, sir; I deliver the pocket-book to you."

He held it out with the seal; and Christian rose to take them, saying carelessly, "The other things — the chain and the little book — are mine."

"Your name then is — "

"Maurice Christian."

A spasm shot through Mr. Lyon. It had seemed possible that he might hear another name, and be freed from the worse half of his anxiety. His next words were not wisely chosen, but escaped him impulsively.

"And you have no other name?"

"What do you mean?" said Christian, sharply.

"Be so good as to reseat yourself."

Christian did not comply. "I 'm rather in a hurry, sir," he said, recovering his coolness. "If it suits you to restore to me those small articles of mine, I shall be glad; but I would rather leave them behind than be detained." He had reflected that the minister was simply a punctilious old bore. The question meant nothing else. But Mr. Lyon had wrought himself up to the task of finding out, then and there, if possible, whether or not this were Annette's husband. How could he lay himself and his sin before God if he wilfully declined to learn the truth?

"Nay, sir, I will not detain you unreasonably," he said in a firmer tone than before. "How long have these articles been your property?"

"Oh, for more than twenty years," said Christian, carelessly.

He was not altogether easy under the minister's persistence, but for that very reason he showed no more impatience.

"You have been in France and Germany?"

"I have been in most countries on the Continent."

"Be so good as to write me your name," said Mr. Lyon, dipping a pen in the ink, and holding it out with a piece of paper.

Christian was much surprised, but not now greatly alarmed. In his rapid conjectures as to the explanation of the minister's curiosity, he had alighted on one which might carry advantage rather than inconvenience. But he was not going to commit himself.

"Before I oblige you there, sir," he said, lay-

ing down the pen, and looking straight at Mr. Lyon, "I must know exactly the reasons you have for putting these questions to me. You are a stranger to me, — an excellent person, I dare say, — but I have no concern about you farther than to get from you those small articles. Do you still doubt that they are mine? You wished, I think, that I should tell you what the locket is like. It has a pair of hands and blue flowers on one side, and the name Annette round the hair on the other side. That is all I have to say. If you wish for anything more from me, you will be good enough to tell me why you wish it. Now then, sir, what is your concern with me?"

The cool stare, the hard challenging voice, with which these words were uttered, made them fall like the beating, cutting chill of heavy hail on Mr. Lyon. He sank back in his chair in utter irresolution and helplessness. How was it possible to lay bare the sad and sacred past in answer to such a call as this? The dread with which he had thought of this man's coming, the strongly confirmed suspicion that he was really Annette's husband, intensified the antipathy created by his gestures and glances. The sensitive little minister knew instinctively that words which would cost him efforts as painful as the obedient footsteps of a wounded, bleeding hound that wills a foreseen throe, would fall on this man as the pressure of tender fingers falls on a brazen glove. And Esther, — if this man was her father, — every additional word might help to bring down irrevocable, perhaps cruel, consequences on her. A thick mist

seemed to have fallen where Mr. Lyon was looking for the track of duty; the difficult question, how far he was to care for consequences in seeking and avowing the truth, seemed anew obscured. All these things, like the vision of a coming calamity, were compressed into a moment of consciousness. Nothing could be done to-day; everything must be deferred. He answered Christian in a low, apologetic tone, —

"It is true, sir; you have told me all I can demand. I have no sufficient reason for detaining your property further."

He handed the note-book and chain to Christian, who had been observing him narrowly, and now said in a tone of indifference, as he pocketed the articles, —

"Very good, sir. I wish you a good-morning."

"Good-morning," said Mr. Lyon, feeling, while the door closed behind his guest, that mixture of uneasiness and relief which all procrastination of difficulty produces in minds capable of strong forecast. The work was still to be done. He had still before him the task of learning everything that could be learned about this man's relation to himself and Esther.

Christian, as he made his way back along Malthouse Lane, was thinking, "This old fellow has got some secret in his head. It 's not likely he can know anything about me; it must be about Bycliffe. But Bycliffe was a gentleman; how should he ever have had anything to do with such a seedy old ranter as that?"

CHAPTER XV

> And doubt shall be as lead upon the feet
> Of thy most anxious will.

MR. LYON was careful to look in at Felix as soon as possible after Christian's departure, to tell him that his trust was discharged. During the rest of the day he was somewhat relieved from agitating reflections by the necessity of attending to his ministerial duties, the rebuke of rebellious singers being one of them ; and on his return from the Monday evening prayer-meeting he was so overcome with weariness that he went to bed without taking note of any objects in his study. But when he rose the next morning, his mind, once more eagerly active, was arrested by Philip Debarry's letter, which still lay open on his desk, and was arrested by precisely that portion which had been unheeded the day before : —

> "I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct."

To understand how these words could carry the suggestion they actually had for the minister in a crisis of peculiar personal anxiety and struggle, we must bear in mind that for many years he had walked through life with the sense of having for a space been unfaithful to what he esteemed the highest trust ever committed to

man,—the ministerial vocation. In a mind of any nobleness, a lapse into transgression against an object still regarded as supreme, issues in a new and purer devotedness, chastised by humility and watched over by a passionate regret. So it was with that ardent spirit which animated the little body of Rufus Lyon. Once in his life he had been blinded, deafened, hurried along by rebellious impulse ; he had gone astray after his own desires, and had let the fire die out on the altar ; and as the true penitent, hating his self-besotted error, asks from all coming life duty instead of joy, and service instead of ease, so Rufus was perpetually on the watch lest he should ever again postpone to some private affection a great public opportunity which to him was equivalent to a command.

Now here was an opportunity brought by a combination of that unexpected, incalculable kind which might be regarded as the Divine emphasis invoking especial attention to trivial events, — an opportunity of securing what Rufus Lyon had often wished for as a means of honouring truth, and exhibiting error in the character of a stammering, halting, short-breathed usurper of office and dignity. What was more exasperating to a zealous preacher, with whom copious speech was not a difficulty but a relief, — who never lacked argument, but only combatants and listeners, — than to reflect that there were thousands on thousands of pulpits in this kingdom, supplied with handsome sounding-boards, and occupying an advantageous position in buildings far larger than the chapel in Malthouse Yard, — buildings sure to be places of re-

sort, even as the markets were, if only from habit and interest; and that these pulpits were filled, or rather made vacuous, by men whose privileged education in the ancient centres of instruction issued in twenty minutes' formal reading of tepid exhortation or probably infirm deductions from premises based on rotten scaffolding? And it is in the nature of exasperation gradually to concentrate itself. The sincere antipathy of a dog towards cats in general, necessarily takes the form of indignant barking at the neighbour's black cat which makes daily trespass; the bark at imagined cats, though a frequent exercise of the canine mind, is yet comparatively feeble. Mr. Lyon's sarcasm was not without an edge when he dilated in general on an elaborate education for teachers which issued in the minimum of teaching, but it found a whetstone in the particular example of that bad system known as the Rector of Treby Magna. There was nothing positive to be said against the Rev. Augustus Debarry; his life could not be pronounced blameworthy except for its negatives. And the good Rufus was too pure-minded not to be glad of that. He had no delight in vice as discrediting wicked opponents; he shrank from dwelling on the images of cruelty or of grossness, and his indignation was habitually inspired only by those moral and intellectual mistakes which darken the soul, but do not injure or degrade the temple of the body. If the Rector had been a less respectable man, Rufus would have more reluctantly made him an object of antagonism; but as an incarnation of soul-destroying error,

dissociated from those baser sins which have no good repute even with the worldly, it would be an argumentative luxury to get into close quarters with him, and fight with a dialectic short-sword in the eyes of the Treby world (sending also a written account thereof to the chief organs of Dissenting opinion). Vice was essentially stupid, — a deaf and eyeless monster, insusceptible to demonstration : the Spirit might work on it by unseen ways, and the unstudied sallies of sermons were often as the arrows which pierced and awakened the brutified conscience ; but illuminated thought, finely dividing speech, were the choicer weapons of the Divine armory, which whoso could wield must be careful not to leave idle.

Here, then, was the longed-for opportunity. Here was an engagement — an expression of a strong wish — on the part of Philip Debarry, if it were in his power, to procure a satisfaction to Rufus Lyon. How had that man of God and exemplary Independent minister, Mr. Ainsworth, of persecuted sanctity, conducted himself when a similar occasion had befallen him at Amsterdam ? He had thought of nothing but the glory of the highest cause, and had converted the offer of recompense into a public debate with a Jew on the chief mysteries of the faith. Here was a model : the case was nothing short of a heavenly indication, and he, Rufus Lyon, would seize the occasion to demand a public debate with the Rector on the Constitution of the true Church.

What if he were inwardly torn by doubt and anxiety concerning his own private relations and

the facts of his past life? That danger of absorption within the narrow bounds of self only urged him the more towards action which had a wider bearing, and might tell on the welfare of England at large. It was decided. Before the minister went down to his breakfast that morning he had written the following letter to Mr. Philip Debarry: —

Sir, — Referring to your letter of yesterday, I find the following words: "I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct."

I am not unaware, sir, that, in the usage of the world, there are words of courtesy (so called) which are understood, by those amongst whom they are current, to have no precise meaning, and to constitute no bond or obligation. I will not now insist that this is an abuse of language, wherein our fallible nature requires the strictest safeguards against laxity and misapplication, for I do not apprehend that in writing the words I have above quoted, you were open to the reproach of using phrases which, while seeming to carry a specific meaning, were really no more than what is called a polite form. I believe, sir, that you used these words advisedly, sincerely, and with an honourable intention of acting on them as a pledge, should such action be demanded. No other supposition on my part would correspond to the character you bear as a young man who aspires (albeit mistakenly) to engraft the finest fruits of public virtue on a creed and institutions whereof the sap is composed rather of human self-seeking than of everlasting truth.

Wherefore I act on this my belief in the integrity of your written word; and I beg you to procure for me (as it is doubtless in your power) that I may be allowed a public discussion with your near relative, the Rector of this parish, the Reverend Augustus Debarry, to be held in the large room of the Free School, or in the Assembly

Room of the Marquis of Granby, these being the largest covered spaces at our command. For I presume he would neither allow me to speak within his church, nor would consent himself to speak within my chapel; and the probable inclemency of the approaching season forbids an assured expectation that we could discourse in the open air. The subjects I desire to discuss are, — first, the Constitution of the true Church; and, secondly, the bearing thereupon of the English Reformation. Confidently expecting that you will comply with this request, which is the sequence of your expressed desire, I remain, sir, yours, with the respect offered to a sincere withstander,

RUFUS LYON.

MALTHOUSE YARD.

After writing this letter, the good Rufus felt that serenity and elevation of mind which is infallibly brought by a preoccupation with the wider relations of things. Already he was beginning to sketch the course his argument might most judiciously take in the coming debate; his thoughts were running into sentences, and marking off careful exceptions in parenthesis; and he had come down and seated himself at the breakfast-table quite automatically, without expectation of toast or coffee, when Esther's voice and touch recalled him to an inward debate of another kind, in which he felt himself much weaker. Again there arose before him the image of that cool, hard-eyed, worldly man, who might be this dear child's father, and one against whose rights he had himself grievously offended. Always as the image recurred to him Mr. Lyon's heart sent forth a prayer for guidance, but no definite guidance had yet made itself visible for him. It could not be guidance, it was a temptation, that said, "Let the matter rest: seek to know no more; know only what

is thrust upon you." The remembrance that in his time of wandering he had wilfully remained in ignorance of facts which he might have inquired after, deepened the impression that it was now an imperative duty to seek the fullest attainable knowledge. And the inquiry might possibly issue in a blessed repose, by putting a negative on all his suspicions. But the more vividly all the circumstances became present to him, the more unfit he felt himself to set about any investigation concerning this man who called himself Maurice Christian. He could seek no confidant or helper among "the brethren;" he was obliged to admit to himself that the members of his church, with whom he hoped to go to heaven, were not easy to converse with on earth touching the deeper secrets of his experience, and were still less able to advise him as to the wisest procedure, in a case of high delicacy, with a worldling who had a carefully trimmed whisker and a fashionable costume. For the first time in his life it occurred to the minister that he should be glad of an adviser who had more worldly than spiritual experience, and that it might not be inconsistent with his principles to seek some light from one who had studied human law. But it was a thought to be paused upon, and not followed out rashly; some other guidance might intervene.

Esther noticed that her father was in a fit of abstraction, that he seemed to swallow his coffee and toast quite unconsciously, and that he vented from time to time a low guttural interjection, which was habitual with him when he was absorbed by an inward discussion. She did not

disturb him by remarks, and only wondered whether anything unusual had occurred on Sunday evening. But at last she thought it needful to say, "You recollect what I told you yesterday, father?"

"Nay, child; what?" said Mr. Lyon, rousing himself.

"That Mr. Jermyn asked me if you would probably be at home this morning before one o'clock."

Esther was surprised to see her father start and change colour as if he had been shaken by some sudden collision before he answered, —

"Assuredly; I do not intend to move from my study after I have once been out to give this letter to Zachary."

"Shall I tell Lyddy to take him up at once to your study if he comes? If not, I shall have to stay in my own room, because I shall be at home all this morning, and it is rather cold now to sit without a fire."

"Yes, my dear, let him come up to me; unless, indeed, he should bring a second person, which might happen, seeing that in all likelihood he is coming, as hitherto, on electioneering business. And I could not well accommodate two visitors upstairs."

While Mr. Lyon went out to Zachary, the pew-opener, to give him a second time the commission of carrying a letter to Treby Manor, Esther gave her injunction to Lyddy that if one gentleman came he was to be shown upstairs, — if two, they were to be shown into the parlour. But she had to resolve various questions before Lyddy clearly saw what was ex-

pected of her, — as that "if it was the gentleman as came on Thursday in the pepper-and-salt coat, was he to be shown upstairs? And the gentleman from the Manor yesterday as went out whistling, — had Miss Esther heard about him? There seemed no end of these great folks coming to Malthouse Yard since there was talk of the election; but they might be poor lost creatures the most of 'em." Whereupon Lyddy shook her head and groaned, under an edifying despair as to the future lot of gentlemen callers.

Esther always avoided asking questions of Lyddy, who found an answer as she found a key, by pouring out a pocketful of miscellanies. But she had remarked so many indications that something had happened to cause her father unusual excitement and mental preoccupation, that she could not help connecting with them the fact of this visit from the Manor, which he had not mentioned to her.

She sat down in the dull parlour and took up her netting; for since Sunday she had felt ununable to read when she was alone, being obliged, in spite of herself, to think of Felix Holt, — to imagine what he would like her to be, and what sort of views he took of life so as to make it seem valuable in the absence of all elegance, luxury, gayety, or romance. Had he yet reflected that he had behaved very rudely to her on Sunday? Perhaps not. Perhaps he had dismissed her from his mind with contempt. And at that thought Esther's eyes smarted unpleasantly. She was fond of netting, because it showed to advantage both her hand and her foot; and across this image of Felix Holt's in-

difference and contempt there passed the vaguer image of a possible somebody who would admire her hands and feet, and delight in looking at their beauty, and long, yet not dare to kiss them. Life would be much easier in the presence of such a love. But it was precisely this longing after her own satisfaction that Felix had reproached her with. Did he want her to be heroic? That seemed impossible without some great occasion. Her life was a heap of fragments, and so were her thoughts; some great energy was needed to bind them together. Esther was beginning to lose her complacency at her own wit and criticism; to lose the sense of superiority in an awakening need for reliance on one whose vision was wider, whose nature was purer and stronger than her own. But then, she said to herself, that "one" must be tender to her, not rude and predominating in his manners. A man with any chivalry in him could never adopt a scolding tone towards a woman, — that is, towards a charming woman. But Felix had no chivalry in him. He loved lecturing and opinion too well ever to love any woman.

In this way Esther strove to see that Felix was thoroughly in the wrong, — at least, if he did not come again expressly to show that he was sorry.

CHAPTER XVI

Trueblue. These men have no votes. Why should I court them?
Grayfox. No votes, but power.
Trueblue. What! over charities?
Grayfox. No, over brains: which disturbs the canvass. In a natural state of things the average price of a vote at Paddlebrook is nine-and-sixpence, throwing the fifty-pound tenants, who cost nothing, into the divisor. But these talking men cause an artificial rise of prices.

THE expected important knock at the door came about twelve o'clock, and Esther could hear that there were two visitors. Immediately the parlour door was opened, and the shaggy-haired, cravatless image of Felix Holt, which was just then full in the mirror of Esther's mind, was displaced by the highly contrasted appearance of a personage whose name she guessed before Mr. Jermyn had announced it. The perfect morning costume of that day differed much from our present ideal; it was essential that a gentleman's chin should be well propped, that his collar should have a voluminous roll, that his waistcoat should imply much discrimination, and that his buttons should be arranged in a manner which would now expose him to general contempt. And it must not be forgotten that at the distant period when Treby Magna first knew the excitements of an election, there existed many other anomalies now obsolete, besides short-waisted coats and broad stiffeners.

But we have some notions of beauty and fitness which withstand the centuries; and quite irrespective of dates, it would be pronounced that at the age of thirty-four Harold Transome

was a striking and handsome man. He was one of those people, as Denner had remarked, to whose presence in the room you could not be indifferent: if you do not hate or dread them, you must find the touch of their hands, nay, their very shadows, agreeable.

Esther felt a pleasure quite new to her as she saw his finely embrowned face and full bright eyes turned towards her with an air of deference by which gallantry must commend itself to a refined woman who is not absolutely free from vanity. Harold Transome regarded women as slight things, but he was fond of slight things in the intervals of business; and he held it among the chief arts of life to keep these pleasant diversions within such bounds that they should never interfere with the course of his serious ambition. Esther was perfectly aware, as he took a chair near her, that he was under some admiring surprise at her appearance and manner. How could it be otherwise? She believed that in the eyes of a high-bred man no young lady in Treby could equal her; she felt a glow of delight at the sense that she was being looked at.

"My father expected you," she said to Mr. Jermyn. "I delivered your letter to him yesterday. He will be down immediately."

She disentangled her foot from her netting and wound it up.

"I hope you are not going to let us disturb you," said Harold, noticing her action. "We come to discuss election affairs, and we particularly desire to interest the ladies."

"I have no interest with any one who is not already on the right side," said Esther, smiling.

"I am happy to see at least that you wear the Liberal colours."

"I fear I must confess that it is more from love of blue than from love of Liberalism. Yellow opinions could only have brunettes on their side." Esther spoke with her usual pretty fluency, but she had no sooner uttered the words than she thought how angry they would have made Felix.

"If my cause is to be recommended by the becomingness of my colours, then I am sure you are acting in my interest by wearing them."

Esther rose to leave the room.

"Must you really go?" said Harold, preparing to open the door for her.

"Yes; I have an engagement, — a lesson at half-past twelve," said Esther, bowing and floating out like a blue-robed Naïad, but not without a suffused blush as she passed through the doorway.

It was a pity the room was so small, Harold Transome thought; this girl ought to walk in a house where there were halls and corridors. But he had soon dismissed this chance preoccupation with Esther; for before the door was closed again Mr. Lyon had entered, and Harold was entirely bent on what had been the object of his visit. The minister, though no elector himself, had considerable influence over Liberal electors, and it was the part of wisdom in a candidate to cement all political adhesion by a little personal regard, if possible. Garstin was a harsh and wiry fellow; he seemed to suggest that sour whey, which some say was the original meaning of Whig in the Scottish, and it might

assist the theoretic advantages of Radicalism if it could be associated with a more generous presence. What would conciliate the personal regard of old Mr. Lyon became a curious problem to Harold, now the little man made his appearance. But canvassing makes a gentleman acquainted with many strange animals, together with the ways of catching and taming them; and thus the knowledge of natural history advances amongst the aristocracy and the wealthy commoners of our land.

"I am very glad to have secured this opportunity of making your personal acquaintance, Mr. Lyon," said Harold, putting out his hand to the minister, when Jermyn had mentioned his name. "I am to address the electors here, in the Market-Place, to-morrow; and I should have been sorry to do so without first paying my respects privately to my chief friends, as there may be points on which they particularly wish me to explain myself."

"You speak civilly, sir, and reasonably," said Mr. Lyon, with a vague short-sighted gaze, in which a candidate's appearance evidently went for nothing. "Pray be seated, gentlemen. It is my habit to stand."

He placed himself at a right angle with his visitors, his worn look of intellectual eagerness, slight frame, and rusty attire, making an odd contrast with their flourishing persons, unblemished costume, and comfortable freedom from excitement. The group was fairly typical of the difference between the men who are animated by ideas and the men who are expected to apply them. Then he drew forth his spectacles, and

began to rub them with the thin end of his coat-tail. He was inwardly exercising great self-mastery, — suppressing the thought of his personal needs, which Jermyn's presence tended to suggest, in order that he might be equal to the larger duties of this occasion.

"I am aware, — Mr. Jermyn has told me," said Harold, — "what good service you have done me already, Mr. Lyon. The fact is, a man of intellect like you was especially needed in my case. The race I am running is really against Garstin only, who calls himself a Liberal, though he cares for nothing and understands nothing except the interests of the wealthy traders. And you have been able to explain the difference between Liberal and Liberal, which, as you and I know, is something like the difference between fish and fish."

"Your comparison is not unapt, sir," said Mr. Lyon, still holding his spectacles in his hand, "at this epoch, when the mind of the nation has been strained on the passing of one measure. Where a great weight has to be moved, we require not so much selected instruments as abundant horse-power. But it is an unavoidable evil of these massive achievements that they encourage a coarse undiscriminatingness obstructive of more nicely wrought results, and an exaggerated expectation inconsistent with the intricacies of our fallen and struggling condition. I say not that compromise is unnecessary, but it is an evil attendant on our imperfection; and I would pray every one to mark that where compromise broadens, intellect

and conscience are thrust into narrower room. Wherefore it has been my object to show our people that there are many who have helped to draw the car of Reform, whose ends are but partial, and who forsake not the ungodly principle of selfish alliances, but would only substitute Syria for Egypt, — thinking chiefly of their own share in peacocks, gold, and ivory."

"Just so," said Harold, who was quick at new languages, and still quicker at translating other men's generalities into his own special and immediate purposes, "men who will be satisfied if they can only bring in a plutocracy, buy up the land, and stick the old crests on their new gateways. Now the practical point to secure against these false Liberals at present is that our electors should not divide their votes. As it appears that many who vote for Debarry are likely to split their votes in favour of Garstin, it is of the first consequence that my voters should give me plumpers. If they divide their votes they can't keep out Debarry, and they may help to keep out me. I feel some confidence in asking you to use your influence in this direction, Mr. Lyon. We candidates have to praise ourselves more than is graceful; but you are aware that while I belong by my birth to the classes that have their roots in tradition and all the old loyalties, my experience has lain chiefly among those who make their own career, and depend on the new rather than the old. I have had the advantage of considering national welfare under varied lights; I have wider views than those of a mere cotton lord. On questions connected

with religious liberty I would stop short at no measure that was not thorough."

"I hope not, sir, — I hope not," said Mr. Lyon, gravely; finally putting on his spectacles and examining the face of the candidate, whom he was preparing to turn into a catechumen. For the good Rufus, conscious of his political importance as an organ of persuasion, felt it his duty to catechise a little, and also to do his part towards impressing a probable legislator with a sense of his responsibility. But the latter branch of duty somewhat obstructed the catechising, for his mind was so urged by considerations which he held in danger of being overlooked, that the questions and answers bore a very slender proportion to his exposition. It was impossible to leave the question of church-rates without noting the grounds of their injustice, and without a brief enumeration of reasons why Mr. Lyon, for his own part, would not present that passive resistance to a legal imposition which had been adopted by the Friends (whose heroism in this regard was nevertheless worthy of all honour).

Comprehensive talkers are apt to be tiresome when we are not athirst for information; but, to be quite fair, we must admit that superior reticence is a good deal due to the lack of matter. Speech is often barren; but silence also does not necessarily brood over a full nest. Your still fowl, blinking at you without remark, may all the while be sitting on one addled nest-egg; and when it takes to cackling, will have nothing to announce but that addled delusion.

Harold Transome was not at all a patient man, but in matters of business he was quite awake to his cue, and in this case it was perhaps easier to listen than to answer questions. But Jermyn, who had plenty of work on his hands, took an opportunity of rising, and saying, as he looked at his watch, —

"I must really be at the office in five minutes. You will find me there, Mr. Transome; you have probably still many things to say to Mr. Lyon."

"I beseech you, sir," said the minister, changing colour, and by a quick movement laying his hand on Jermyn's arm, — "I beseech you to favour me with an interview on some private business, — this evening, if it were possible."

Mr. Lyon, like others who are habitually occupied with impersonal subjects, was liable to this impulsive sort of action. He snatched at the details of life as if they were darting past him, — as if they were like the ribbons at his knees, which would never be tied all day if they were not tied on the instant. Through these spasmodic leaps out of his abstractions into real life, it constantly happened that he suddenly took a course which had been the subject of too much doubt with him ever to have been determined on by continuous thought. And if Jermyn had not startled him by threatening to vanish just when he was plunged into politics, he might never have made up his mind to confide in a worldly attorney.

("An odd man," as Mrs. Muscat observed, "to have such a gift in the pulpit. But there 's One knows better than we do." — which. in a

lady who rarely felt her judgment at a loss, was a concession that showed much piety.)

Jermyn was surprised at the little man's eagerness. "By all means," he answered quite cordially. "Could you come to my office at eight o'clock?"

"For several reasons I must beg you to come to me."

"Oh, very good! I'll walk out and see you this evening, if possible. I shall have much pleasure in being of any use to you." Jermyn felt that in the eyes of Harold he was appearing all the more valuable when his services were thus in request. He went out; and Mr. Lyon easily relapsed into politics, for he had been on the brink of a favourite subject on which he was at issue with his fellow-Liberals.

At that time, when faith in the efficacy of political change was at fever-heat in ardent Reformers, many measures which men are still discussing with little confidence on either side were then talked about and disposed of like property in near reversion. Crying abuses — "bloated paupers," "bloated pluralists," and other corruptions hindering men from being wise and happy — had to be fought against and slain. Such a time is a time of hope. Afterwards, when the corpses of those monsters have been held up to the public wonder and abhorrence, and yet wisdom and happiness do not follow, but rather a more abundant breeding of the foolish and unhappy, comes a time of doubt and despondency. But in the great Reform-year Hope was mighty; the prospect of Reform had even served the voters in-

stead of drink; and in one place, at least, there had been "a dry election." And now the speakers at Reform banquets were exuberant in congratulation and promise: Liberal clergymen of the Establishment toasted Liberal Catholic clergymen without any allusion to scarlet, and Catholic clergymen replied with a like tender reserve. Some dwelt on the abolition of all abuses, and on millennial blessedness generally; others, whose imaginations were less suffused with exhalations of the dawn, insisted chiefly on the ballot-box.

Now on this question of the ballot the minister strongly took the negative side. Our pet opinions are usually those which place us in a minority of a minority amongst our own party; very happily, else those poor opinions, born with no silver spoon in their mouths, — how would they get nourished and fed? So it was with Mr. Lyon and his objection to the ballot. But he had thrown out a remark on the subject which was not quite clear to his hearer, who interpreted it according to his best calculation of probabilities.

"I have no objection to the ballot," said Harold, "but I think that is not the sort of thing we have to work at just now. We should n't get it. And other questions are imminent."

"Then, sir, you would vote for the ballot?" said Mr. Lyon, stroking his chin.

"Certainly, if the point came up. I have too much respect for the freedom of the voter to oppose anything which offers a chance of making that freedom more complete."

Mr. Lyon looked at the speaker with a pitying smile and a subdued "H'm-m-m," which Harold took for a sign of satisfaction. He was soon undeceived.

"You grieve me, sir; you grieve me much. And I pray you to reconsider this question, for it will take you to the root, as I think, of political morality. I engage to show to any impartial mind, duly furnished with the principles of public and private rectitude, that the ballot would be pernicious, and that if it were not pernicious it would still be futile. I will show, first, that it would be futile as a preservative from bribery and illegitimate influence; and, secondly, that it would be in the worst kind pernicious, as shutting the door against those influences whereby the soul of a man and the character of a citizen are duly educated for their great functions. Be not alarmed if I detain you, sir. It is well worth the while."

"Confound this old man!" thought Harold. "I 'll never make a canvassing call on a preacher again, unless he has lost his voice from a cold." He was going to excuse himself as prudently as he could, by deferring the subject till the morrow, and inviting Mr. Lyon to come to him in the committee-room before the time appointed for his public speech; but he was relieved by the opening of the door. Lyddy put in her head to say, —

"If you please, sir, here 's Mr. Holt wants to know if he may come in and speak to the gentleman. He begs your pardon, but you 're to say 'no' if you don't like him to come."

"Nay; show him in at once, Lyddy. A

young man," Mr. Lyon went on, speaking to Harold, "whom a representative ought to know, — no voter, but a man of ideas and study."

"He is thoroughly welcome," said Harold, truthfully enough, though he felt little interest in the voteless man of ideas except as a diversion from the subject of the ballot. He had been standing for the last minute or two, feeling less of a victim in that attitude, and more able to calculate on means of escape.

"Mr. Holt, sir," said the minister, as Felix entered, "is a young friend of mine, whose opinions on some points I hope to see altered, but who has a zeal for public justice which I trust he will never lose."

"I am glad to see Mr. Holt," said Harold, bowing. He perceived from the way in which Felix bowed to him and turned to the most distant spot in the room, that the candidate's shake of the hand would not be welcome here. "A formidable fellow," he thought, "capable of mounting a cart in the market-place to-morrow and cross-examining me, if I say anything that does n't please him."

"Mr. Lyon," said Felix, "I have taken a liberty with you in asking to see Mr. Transome when he is engaged with you. But I have to speak to him on a matter which I should n't care to make public at present, and it is one on which I am sure you will back me. I heard that Mr. Transome was here, so I ventured to come. I hope you will both excuse me, as my business refers to some electioneering measures which are being taken by Mr. Transome's agents."

"Pray go on," said Harold, expecting something unpleasant.

"I'm not going to speak against treating voters," said Felix; "I suppose buttered ale, and grease of that sort to make the wheels go, belong to the necessary humbug of Representation. But I wish to ask you, Mr. Transome, whether it is with your knowledge that agents of yours are bribing rough fellows who are no voters — the colliers and navvies at Sproxton — with the chance of extra drunkenness, that they may make a posse on your side at the nomination and polling?"

"Certainly not," said Harold. "You are aware, my dear sir, that a candidate is very much at the mercy of his agents as to the means by which he is returned, especially when many years' absence has made him a stranger to the men actually conducting business. But are you sure of your facts?"

"As sure as my senses can make me," said Felix, who then briefly described what had happened on Sunday. "I believed that you were ignorant of all this, Mr. Transome," he ended, "and that was why I thought some good might be done by speaking to you. If not, I should be tempted to expose the whole affair as a disgrace to the Radical party. I'm a Radical myself, and mean to work all my life long against privilege, monopoly, and oppression. But I would rather be a livery-servant proud of my master's title, than I would seem to make common cause with scoundrels who turn the best hopes of men into bywords for cant and dishonesty."

"Your energetic protest is needless here, sir," said Harold, offended at what sounded like a threat, and was certainly premature enough to be in bad taste. In fact, this error of behaviour in Felix proceeded from a repulsion which was mutual. It was a constant source of irritation to him that the public men on his side were, on the whole, not conspicuously better than the public men on the other side; that the spirit of innovation, which with him was a part of religion, was in many of its mouthpieces no more of a religion than the faith in rotten boroughs; and he was thus predisposed to distrust Harold Transome. Harold, in his turn, disliked impracticable notions of loftiness and purity, — disliked all enthusiasm; and he thought he saw a very troublesome, vigorous incorporation of that nonsense in Felix. But it would be foolish to exasperate him in any way.

"If you choose to accompany me to Jermyn's office," he went on, "the matter shall be inquired into in your presence. I think you will agree with me, Mr. Lyon, that this will be the most satisfactory course?"

"Doubtless," said the minister, who liked the candidate very well, and believed that he would be amenable to argument; "and I would caution my young friend against a too great hastiness of words and action. David's cause against Saul was a righteous one; nevertheless not all who clave unto David were righteous men."

"The more was the pity, sir," said Felix, "especially if he winked at their malpractices."

Mr. Lyon smiled, shook his head, and stroked his favourite's arm deprecatingly.

"It is rather too much for any man to keep the consciences of all his party," said Harold. "If you had lived in the East, as I have, you would be more tolerant. More tolerant, for example, of an active, industrious selfishness, such as we have here, though it may not always be quite scrupulous; you would see how much better it is than an idle selfishness. I have heard it said, a bridge is a good thing, — worth helping to make, though half the men who worked at it were rogues."

"Oh, yes!" said Felix, scornfully, "give me a handful of generalities and analogies, and I'll undertake to justify Burke and Hare, and prove them benefactors of their species. I'll tolerate no nuisances but such as I can't help; and the question now is, not whether we can do away with all the nuisances in the world, but with a particular nuisance under our noses."

"Then we had better cut the matter short, as I propose, by going at once to Jermyn's," said Harold. "In that case I must bid you good-morning, Mr. Lyon."

"I would fain," said the minister, looking uneasy, — "I would fain have had a further opportunity of considering that question of the ballot with you. The reasons against it need not be urged lengthily; they only require complete enumeration to prevent any seeming hiatus, where an opposing fallacy might thrust itself in."

"Never fear, sir," said Harold, shaking Mr. Lyon's hand cordially, "there will be opportunities. Shall I not see you in the committee-room to-morrow?"

"I think not," said Mr. Lyon, rubbing his brow, with a sad remembrance of his personal anxieties; "but I will send you, if you will permit me, a brief writing, on which you can meditate at your leisure."

"I shall be delighted. Good-by."

Harold and Felix went out together; and the minister, going up to his dull study, asked himself whether, under the pressure of conflicting experience, he had faithfully discharged the duties of the past interview?

If a cynical sprite were present, riding on one of the motes in that dusty room, he may have made himself merry at the illusions of the little minister who brought so much conscience to bear on the production of so slight an effect. I confess to smiling myself, being sceptical as to the effect of ardent appeals and nice distinctions on gentlemen who are got up, both inside and out, as candidates in the style of the period; but I never smiled at Mr. Lyon's trustful energy without falling to penitence and veneration immediately after. For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities, — a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces, — a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life. We see human heroism broken into units, and say this unit did little, — might as well not have been. But in this way we might break up a great army into units; in this way we might break the sunlight into fragments, and think that this and the other might be cheaply parted with. Let us rather raise a monument to the soldiers whose brave

hearts only kept the ranks unbroken, and met death, — a monument to the faithful who were not famous, and who are precious as the continuity of the sunbeams is precious, though some of them fall unseen and on barrenness.

At present, looking back on that day at Treby, it seems to me that the sadder illusion lay with Harold Transome, who was trusting in his own skill to shape the success of his own morrows, ignorant of what many yesterdays had determined for him beforehand.

CHAPTER XVII

It is a good and soothfast saw:
Half-roasted never will be raw;
No dough is dried once more to meal,
No crock new-shapen by the wheel;
You can't turn curds to milk again,
Nor Now, by wishing, back to Then;
And having tasted stolen honey,
You can't buy innocence for money.

JERMYN was not particularly pleased that some chance had apparently hindered Harold Transome from making other canvassing visits immediately after leaving Mr. Lyon, and so had sent him back to the office earlier than he had been expected to come. The inconvenient chance he guessed at once to be represented by Felix Holt, whom he knew very well by Trebian report to be a young man with so little of the ordinary Christian motives as to making an appearance and getting on in the world, that he presented no handle to any judicious and respectable person who might be willing to make use of him.

Harold Transome, on his side, was a good deal annoyed at being worried by Felix into an inquiry about electioneering details. The real dignity and honesty there was in him made him shrink from this necessity of satisfying a man with a troublesome tongue; it was as if he were to show indignation at the discovery of one barrel with a false bottom, when he had invested his money in a manufactory where a larger or smaller number of such barrels had

always been made. A practical man must seek a good end by the only possible means; that is to say, if he is to get into Parliament he must not be too particular. It was not disgraceful to be neither a Quixote nor a theorist, aiming to correct the moral rules of the world; but whatever actually was, or might prove to be, disgraceful, Harold held in detestation. In this mood he pushed on unceremoniously to the inner office without waiting to ask questions; and when he perceived that Jermyn was not alone, he said, with haughty quickness, —

"A question about the electioneering at Sproxton. Can you give your attention to it at once? Here is Mr. Holt, who has come to me about the business."

"A — yes — a — certainly," said Jermyn, who, as usual, was the more cool and deliberate because he was vexed. He was standing, and, as he turned round, his broad figure concealed the person who was seated writing at the bureau. "Mr. Holt — a — will doubtless — a — make a point of saving a busy man's time. You can speak at once. This gentleman" — here Jermyn made a slight backward movement of the head — "is one of ourselves; he is a true-blue."

"I have simply to complain," said Felix, "that one of your agents has been sent on a bribing expedition to Sproxton, — with what purpose you, sir, may know better than I do. Mr. Transome, it appears, was ignorant of the affair, and does not approve it."

Jermyn, looking gravely and steadily at Felix while he was speaking, at the same time drew

forth a small sheaf of papers from his side-pocket, and then, as he turned his eyes slowly on Harold, felt in his waistcoat-pocket for his pencil-case.

"I don't approve it at all," said Harold, who hated Jermyn's calculated slowness and conceit in his own impenetrability. "Be good enough to put a stop to it, will you?"

"Mr. Holt, I know, is an excellent Liberal," said Jermyn, just inclining his head to Harold, and then alternately looking at Felix and docketing his bills; "but he is perhaps too inexperienced to be aware that no canvass — a — can be conducted without the action of able men, who must — a — be trusted, and not interfered with. And as to any possibility of promising to put a stop — a — to any procedure, — a — that depends. If he had ever held the coachman's ribbons in his hands, as I have in my younger days, — a — he would know that stopping is not always easy."

"I know very little about holding ribbons," said Felix; "but I saw clearly enough at once that more mischief had been done than could be well mended. Though I believe, if it were heartily tried, the treating might be reduced, and something might be done to hinder the men from turning out in a body to make a noise, which might end in worse."

"They might be hindered from making a noise on our side," said Jermyn, smiling. "That is perfectly true. But if they made a noise on the other, would your purpose be answered better, sir?"

Harold was moving about in an irritated

manner while Felix and Jermyn were speaking. He preferred leaving the talk to the attorney, of whose talk he himself liked to keep as clear as possible.

"I can only say," answered Felix, "that if you make use of those heavy fellows when the drink is in them, I should n't like your responsibility. You might as well drive bulls to roar on our side as bribe a set of colliers and navvies to shout and groan."

"A lawyer may well envy your command of language, Mr. Holt," said Jermyn, pocketing his bills again, and shutting up his pencil; "but he would not be satisfied with the accuracy — a — of your terms. You must permit me to check your use of the word 'bribery.' The essence of bribery is that it should be legally proved; there is not such a thing — a — *in rerum natura* — a — as unproved bribery. There has been no such thing as bribery at Sproxton, I 'll answer for it. The presence of a body of stalwart fellows on — a — the Liberal side will tend to preserve order; for we know that the benefit clubs from the Pitchley district will show for Debarry. Indeed, the gentleman who has conducted the canvass at Sproxton is experienced in parliamentary affairs, and would not exceed — a — the necessary measures that a rational judgment would dictate."

"What! you mean the man who calls himself Johnson?" said Felix, in a tone of disgust.

Before Jermyn chose to answer, Harold broke in, saying quickly and peremptorily: "The long and the short of it is this, Mr. Holt: I shall desire and insist that whatever can be done by

way of remedy shall be done. Will that satisfy you? You see now some of a candidate's difficulties?" said Harold, breaking into his most agreeable smile. "I hope you will have some pity for me."

"I suppose I must be content," said Felix, not thoroughly propitiated. "I bid you good-morning, gentlemen."

When he was gone out, and had closed the door behind him, Harold, turning round and flashing, in spite of himself, an angry look at Jermyn, said, —

"And who is Johnson? an *alias*, I suppose. It seems you are fond of the name."

Jermyn turned perceptibly paler; but disagreeables of this sort between himself and Harold had been too much in his anticipations of late for him to be taken by surprise. He turned quietly round, and just touched the shoulder of the person seated at the bureau, who now rose.

"On the contrary," Jermyn answered, "the Johnson in question is this gentleman, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you as one of my most active helpmates in electioneering business, — Mr. Johnson, of Bedford Row, London. I am comparatively a novice — a — in these matters. But he was engaged with James Putty in two hardly contested elections, and there could scarcely be a better initiation. Putty is one of the first men of the country as an agent — a — on the Liberal side — a — eh, Johnson? I think Makepiece is — a — not altogether a match for him, not quite of the same calibre — a — *haud consimili ingenio* — a — in tactics — a — and in experience?"

"Makepiece is a wonderful man, and so is Putty," said the glib Johnson, too vain not to be pleased with an opportunity of speaking, even when the situation was rather awkward. "Makepiece for scheming, but Putty for management. Putty knows men, sir," he went on, turning to Harold; "it 's a thousand pities that you have not had his talents employed in your service. He 's beyond any man for saving a candidate's money, — does half the work with his tongue. He 'll talk of anything, from the Areopagus, and that sort of thing, down to the joke about 'Where are you going, Paddy?' — you know what I mean, sir! 'Back again, says Paddy,' — an excellent electioneering joke. Putty understands these things. He has said to me, 'Johnson, bear in mind there are two ways of speaking an audience will always like: one is to tell them what they don't understand; and the other is to tell them what they 're used to.' I shall never be the man to deny that I owe a great deal to Putty. I always say it was a most providential thing in the Mugham election last year that Putty was not on the Tory side. He managed the women; and if you 'll believe me, sir, one fourth of the men would never have voted if their wives had n't driven them to it for the good of their families. And as for speaking, — it 's currently reported in our London circles that Putty writes regularly for the 'Times.' He has that kind of language; and I need n't tell you, Mr. Transome, that it 's the apex, which, I take it, means the tiptop, — and nobody can get higher than that, I think. I 've belonged to a political debating society myself;

I 've heard a little language in my time ; but when Mr. Jermyn first spoke to me about having the honour to assist in your canvass of North Loamshire," — here Johnson played with his watch-seals and balanced himself a moment on his toes, — "the very first thing I said was, 'And there 's Garstin has got Putty! No Whig could stand against a Whig,' I said, 'who had Putty on his side: I hope Mr. Transome goes in for something of a deeper colour.' I don't say that, as a general rule, opinions go for much in a return, Mr. Transome ; it depends on who are in the field before you, and on the skill of your agents. But as a Radical, and a moneyed Radical, you are in a fine position, sir ; and with care and judgment — with care and judgment — "

It had been impossible to interrupt Johnson before without the most impolitic rudeness. Jermyn was not sorry that he should talk, even if he made a fool of himself ; for in that solid shape, exhibiting the average amount of human foibles, he seemed less of the *alias* which Harold had insinuated him to be, and had all the additional plausibility of a lie with a circumstance.

Harold had thrown himself with contemptuous resignation into a chair, had drawn off one of his buff gloves, and was looking at his hand. But when Johnson gave his iteration with a slightly slackened pace, Harold looked up at him and broke in, —

"Well then, Mr. Johnson, I shall be glad if you will use your care and judgment in putting an end, as well as you can, to this Sproxton affair ; else it may turn out an ugly business."

"Excuse me, sir; I must beg you to look at the matter a little more closely. You will see that it is impossible to take a single step backward at Sproxton. It was a matter of necessity to get the Sproxton men; else I know to a certainty the other side would have laid hold of them first, and now I 've undermined Garstin's people. They 'll use their authority, and give a little shabby treating, but I 've taken all the wind out of their sails. But if, by your orders, I or Mr. Jermyn here were to break promise with the honest fellows, and offend Chubb the publican, what would come of it? Chubb would leave no stone unturned against you, sir; he would egg on his customers against you; the colliers and navvies would be at the nomination and at the election all the same, or rather not all the same, for they would be there against us; and instead of hustling people good-humouredly by way of a joke, and counterbalancing Debarry's cheers, they 'd help to kick the cheering and the voting out of our men, and instead of being, let us say, half-a-dozen ahead of Garstin, you 'd be half-a-dozen behind him, that 's all. I speak plain English to you, Mr. Transome, though I 've the highest respect for you as a gentleman of first-rate talents and position. But, sir, to judge of these things, a man must know the English voter and the English publican; and it would be a poor tale indeed" — here Mr. Johnson's mouth took an expression at once bitter and pathetic — "that a gentleman like you, to say nothing of the good of the country, should have gone to the expense and trouble of a canvass for nothing but to find himself out of Par-

liament at the end of it. I 've seen it again and again ; it looks bad in the cleverest man to have to sing small."

Mr. Johnson's argument was not the less stringent because his idioms were vulgar. It requires a conviction and resolution amounting to heroism not to wince at phrases that class our foreshadowed endurance among those common and ignominious troubles which the world is more likely to sneer at than to pity. Harold remained a few moments in angry silence looking at the floor, with one hand on his knee and the other on his hat, as if he were preparing to start up.

" As to undoing anything that 's been done down there," said Johnson, throwing in this observation as something into the bargain, " I must wash my hands of it, sir. I could n't work knowingly against your interest. And that young man who has just gone out, — you don't believe that he need be listened to, I hope ? Chubb the publican hates him. Chubb would guess he was at the bottom of your having the treating stopped, and he 'd set half-a-dozen of the colliers to duck him in the canal, or break his head by mistake. I 'm an experienced man, sir. I hope I 've put it clear enough."

" Certainly, the exposition befits the subject," said Harold, scornfully, his dislike of the man Johnson's personality being stimulated by causes which Jermyn more than conjectured. " It 's a damned unpleasant, ravelled business that you and Mr. Jermyn have knit up between you. I 've no more to say."

" Then, sir, if you 've no more commands, I

don't wish to intrude. I shall wish you good-morning, sir," said Johnson, passing out quickly.

Harold knew that he was indulging his temper, and he would probably have restrained it as a foolish move if he had thought there was great danger in it. But he was beginning to drop much of his caution and self-mastery where Jermyn was concerned, under the growing conviction that the attorney had very strong reasons for being afraid of him, — reasons which would only be reinforced by any action hostile to the Transome interest. As for a sneak like this Johnson, a gentleman had to pay him, not to please him. Harold had smiles at command in the right place, but he was not going to smile when it was neither necessary nor agreeable. He was one of those good-humoured yet energetic men, who have the gift of anger, hatred, and scorn upon occasion, though they are too healthy and self-contented for such feelings to get generated in them without external occasion; and in relation to Jermyn the gift was coming into fine exercise.

"A — pardon me, Mr. Harold," said Jermyn, speaking as soon as Johnson went out, "but I am sorry — a — you should behave disobligingly to a man who has it in his power to do much service, — who, in fact, holds many threads in his hands. I admit that — a — *nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*, as we say — a — "

"Speak for yourself," said Harold. "I don't talk in tags of Latin, which might be learned by a schoolmaster's footboy. I find the King's English express my meaning better."

"In the King's English, then," said Jermyn,

who could be idiomatic enough when he was stung, "a candidate should keep his kicks till he 's a member."

"Oh, I suppose Johnson will bear a kick if you bid him. You 're his principal, I believe."

"Certainly, thus far — a — he is my London agent. But he is a man of substance, and — "

"I shall know what he is if it 's necessary, I dare say. But I must jump into the carriage again. I 've no time to lose; I must go to Hawkins at the factory. Will you go?"

When Harold was gone, Jermyn's handsome face gathered blackness. He hardly ever wore his worst expression in the presence of others, and but seldom when he was alone, for he was not given to believe that any game would ultimately go against him. His luck had been good. New conditions might always turn up to give him new chances; and if affairs threatened to come to an extremity between Harold and himself, he trusted to finding some sure resource.

"He means to see to the bottom of everything if he can, that 's quite plain," said Jermyn to himself. "I believe he has been getting another opinion; he has some new light about those annuities on the estate that are held in Johnson's name. He has inherited a deuced faculty for business, — there 's no denying that. But I shall beg leave to tell him that I 've propped up the family. I don't know where they would have been without me; and if it comes to balancing, I know into which scale the gratitude ought to go. Not that he 's likely to feel any, — but he can feel something else; and

if he makes signs of setting the dogs on me, I shall make him feel it. The people named Transome owe me a good deal more than I owe them."

In this way Mr. Jermyn inwardly appealed against an unjust construction which he foresaw that his old acquaintance the Law might put on certain items in his history.

I have known persons who have been suspected of undervaluing gratitude, and excluding it from the list of virtues ; but on closer observation it has been seen that if they have never felt grateful, it has been for want of an opportunity ; and that, far from despising gratitude, they regard it as the virtue most of all incumbent — on others towards them.

CHAPTER XVIII

> The little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.
>
> WORDSWORTH: *Tintern Abbey.*

JERMYN did not forget to pay his visit to the minister in Malthouse Yard that evening. The mingled irritation, dread, and defiance which he was feeling towards Harold Transome in the middle of the day depended on too many and far-stretching causes to be dissipated by eight o'clock; but when he left Mr. Lyon's house he was in a state of comparative triumph in the belief that he, and he alone, was now in possession of facts which, once grouped together, made a secret that gave him new power over Harold.

Mr. Lyon, in his need for help from one who had that wisdom of the serpent which, he argued, is not forbidden, but is only of hard acquirement to dove-like innocence, had been gradually led to pour out to the attorney all the reasons which made him desire to know the truth about the man who called himself Maurice Christian: he had shown all the precious relics, the locket, the letters, and the marriage certificate. And Jermyn had comforted him by confidently promising to ascertain, without scandal or premature betrayals, whether this man were really Annette's husband Maurice Christian Bycliffe.

Jermyn was not rash in making this promise, since he had excellent reasons for believing that

he had already come to a true conclusion on the subject. But he wished both to know a little more of this man himself, and to keep Mr. Lyon in ignorance — not a difficult precaution — in an affair which it cost the minister so much pain to speak of. An easy opportunity of getting an interview with Christian was sure to offer itself before long, — might even offer itself to-morrow. Jermyn had seen him more than once, though hitherto without any reason for observing him with interest; he had heard that Philip Debarry's courier was often busy in the town, and it seemed especially likely that he would be seen there when the Market was to be agitated by politics, and the new candidate was to show his paces.

The world of which Treby Magna was the centre was naturally curious to see the young Transome, who had come from the East, was as rich as a Jew, and called himself a Radical, — characteristics all equally vague in the minds of various excellent rate-payers, who drove to market in their taxed carts or in their hereditary gigs. Places at convenient windows had been secured beforehand for a few best bonnets; but, in general, a Radical candidate excited no ardent feminine partisanship, even among the Dissenters in Treby, if they were of the prosperous and long-resident class. Some chapel-going ladies were fond of remembering that "their family had been Church;" others objected to politics altogether as having spoiled old neighbourliness, and sundered friends who had kindred views as to cowslip wine and Michaelmas cleaning; others, of the melancholy sort,

said it would be well if people would think less of reforming Parliament and more of pleasing God. Irreproachable Dissenting matrons, like Mrs. Muscat, whose youth had been passed in a short-waisted bodice and tight skirt, had never been animated by the struggle for liberty, and had a timid suspicion that religion was desecrated by being applied to the things of this world. Since Mr. Lyon had been in Malthouse Yard there had been far too much mixing up of politics with religion; but at any rate, these ladies had never yet been to hear speechifying in the market-place, and they were not going to begin that practice.

Esther, however, had heard some of her feminine acquaintances say that they intended to sit at the druggist's upper window, and she was inclined to ask her father if he could think of a suitable place where she also might see and hear. Two inconsistent motives urged her. She knew that Felix cared earnestly for all public questions, and she supposed that he held it one of her deficiencies not to care about them; well, she would try to learn the secret of this ardour, which was so strong in him that it animated what she thought the dullest form of life. She was not too stupid to find it out. But this self-correcting motive was presently displaced by a motive of a different sort. It had been a pleasant variety in her monotonous days to see a man like Harold Transome, with a distinguished appearance and polished manners, and she would like to see him again: he suggested to her that brighter and more luxurious life on which her imagination dwelt without the painful effort it

required to conceive the mental condition which would place her in complete sympathy with Felix Holt. It was this less unaccustomed prompting of which she was chiefly conscious when she awaited her father's coming down to breakfast. Why, indeed, should she trouble herself so much about Felix?

Mr. Lyon, more serene now that he had unbosomed his anxieties and obtained a promise of help, was already swimming so happily in the deep water of polemics in expectation of Philip Debarry's answer to his challenge, that, in the occupation of making a few notes lest certain felicitous inspirations should be wasted, he had forgotten to come down to breakfast. Esther, suspecting his abstraction, went up to his study and found him at his desk looking up with wonder at her interruption.

"Come, father, you have forgotten your breakfast."

"It is true, child; I will come," he said, lingering to make some final strokes.

"Oh, you naughty father!" said Esther, as he got up from his chair, "your coat-collar is twisted, your waist-coat is buttoned all wrong, and you have not brushed your hair. Sit down and let me brush it again as I did yesterday."

He sat down obediently, while Esther took a towel, which she threw over his shoulders, and then brushed the thick long fringe of soft auburn hair. This very trifling act, which she had brought herself to for the first time yesterday, meant a great deal in Esther's little history. It had been her habit to leave the mending of her father's clothes to Lyddy; she had not liked

even to touch his cloth garments; still less had it seemed a thing she would willingly undertake to correct his toilet, and use a brush for him. But having once done this, under her new sense of faulty omission, the affectionateness that was in her flowed so pleasantly, as she saw how much her father was moved by what he thought a great act of tenderness, that she quite longed to repeat it. This morning, as he sat under her hands, his face had such a calm delight in it that she could not help kissing the top of his bald head; and afterwards, when they were seated at breakfast, she said merrily, —

"Father, I shall make a *petit maître* of you by and by; your hair looks so pretty and silken when it is well brushed."

"Nay, child, I trust that while I would willingly depart from my evil habit of a somewhat slovenly forgetfulness in my attire, I shall never arrive at the opposite extreme. For though there is that in apparel which pleases the eye, and I deny not that your neat gown and the colour thereof, — which is that of certain little flowers that spread themselves in the hedgerows, and make a blueness there as of the sky when it is deepened in the water, — I deny not, I say, that these minor strivings after a perfection which is as it were an irrecoverable yet haunting memory, are a good in their proportion. Nevertheless, the brevity of our life, and the hurry and crush of the great battle with error and sin, often oblige us to an advised neglect of what is less momentous. This, I conceive, is the principle on which my friend Felix Holt acts; and I cannot but think the light comes

from the true fount, though it shines through obstructions."

"You have not seen Mr. Holt since Sunday, have you, father?"

"Yes; he was here yesterday. He sought Mr. Transome, having a matter of some importance to speak upon with him, And I saw him afterward in the street, when he agreed that I should call for him this morning before I go into the market-place. He will have it," Mr. Lyon went on, smiling, "that I must not walk about in the crowd without him to act as my special constable."

Esther felt vexed with herself that her heart was suddenly beating with unusual quickness, and that her last resolution not to trouble herself about what Felix thought, had transformed itself with magic swiftness into mortification that he evidently avoided coming to the house when she was there, though he used to come on the slightest occasion. He knew that she was always at home until the afternoon on market-days; that was the reason why he would not call for her father. Of course, it was because he attributed such littleness to her that he supposed she would retain nothing else than a feeling of offence towards him for what he had said to her. Such distrust of any good in others, such arrogance of immeasurable superiority, was extremely ungenerous. But presently she said, —

"I should have liked to hear Mr. Transome speak, but I suppose it is too late to get a place now."

"I am not sure; I would fain have you go if

you desire it, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, who could not bear to deny Esther any lawful wish. "Walk with me to Mistress Holt's, and we will learn from Felix, who will doubtless already have been out, whether he could lead you in safety to Friend Lambert's."

Esther was glad of the proposal, because, if it answered no other purpose, it would be an easy way of obliging Felix to see her, and of showing him that it was not she who cherished offence. But when, later in the morning, she was walking towards Mrs. Holt's with her father, they met Mr. Jermyn, who stopped them to ask, in his most affable manner, whether Miss Lyon intended to hear the candidate, and whether she had secured a suitable place. And he ended by insisting that his daughters, who were presently coming in an open carriage, should call for her, if she would permit them. It was impossible to refuse this civility; and Esther turned back to await the carriage, pleased with the certainty of hearing and seeing, yet sorry to miss Felix. There was another day for her to think of him with unsatisfied resentment, mixed with some longings for a better understanding; and in our spring-time every day has its hidden growths in the mind, as it has in the earth when the little folded blades are getting ready to pierce the ground.

CHAPTER XIX

Consistency? — I never changed my mind
Which is, and always was, to live at ease.

IT was only in the time of the summer fairs that the market-place had ever looked more animated than it did under that autumn mid-day sun. There were plenty of blue cockades and streamers, faces at all the windows, and a crushing buzzing crowd, urging each other backwards and forwards round the small hustings in front of the Ram Inn, which showed its more plebeian sign at right angles with the venerable Marquis of Granby. Sometimes there were scornful shouts, sometimes a rolling cascade of cheers, sometimes the shriek of a penny whistle; but above all these fitful and feeble sounds, the fine old church-tower, which looked down from above the trees on the other side of the narrow stream, sent vibrating, at every quarter, the sonorous tones of its great bell, the Good Queen Bess.

Two carriages, with blue ribbons on the harness, were conspicuous near the hustings. One was Jermyn's, filled with the brilliantly attired daughters, accompanied by Esther, whose quieter dress helped to mark her out for attention as the most striking of the group. The other was Harold Transome's; but in this there was no lady, — only the olive-skinned Dominic, whose acute yet mild face was brightened by the occupation of amusing little Harry and rescuing from his

tyrannies a King Charles puppy, with big eyes, much after the pattern of the boy's.

This Trebian crowd did not count for much in the political force of the nation, but it was not the less determined as to lending or not lending its ears. No man was permitted to speak from the platform except Harold and his uncle Lingon, though, in the interval of expectation, several Liberals had come forward. Among these ill-advised persons the one whose attempt met the most emphatic resistance was Rufus Lyon. This might have been taken for resentment at the unreasonableness of the cloth, that, not content with pulpits from whence to tyrannize over the ears of men, wishes to have the larger share of the platforms; but it was not so, for Mr. Lingon was heard with much cheering, and would have been welcomed again.

The Rector of Little Treby had been a favourite in the neighbourhood since the beginning of the century. A clergyman thoroughly unclerical in his habits had a piquancy about him which made him a sort of practical joke. He had always been called Jack Lingon, or Parson Jack, — sometimes, in older and less serious days, even "Cock-fighting Jack." He swore a little when the point of a joke seemed to demand it, and was fond of wearing a coloured bandana tied loosely over his cravat, together with large brown leather leggings; he spoke in a pithy, familiar way that people could understand, and had none of that frigid mincingness called dignity, which some have thought a peculiar clerical disease. In fact, he was "a charicter," — something cheerful to think of, not

entirely out of connection with Sunday and sermons. And it seemed in keeping that he should have turned sharp round in politics, his opinions being only part of the excellent joke called Parson Jack. When his red eagle face and white hair were seen on the platform, the Dissenters hardly cheered this questionable Radical; but to make amends, all the Tory farmers gave him a friendly "hurray." "Let 's hear what old Jack will say for himself," was the predominant feeling among them; "he 'll have something funny to say, I 'll bet a penny."

It was only Lawyer Labron's young clerks and their hangers-on who were sufficiently dead to Trebian traditions to assail the parson with various sharp-edged interjections, such as broken shells, and cries of "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Come now, my lads," he began, in his full, pompous, yet jovial tones, thrusting his hands into the stuffed-out pockets of his great-coat, "I 'll tell you what; I 'm a parson, you know; I ought to return good for evil. So here are some good nuts for you to crack in return for your shells."

There was a roar of laughter and cheering as he threw handfuls of nuts and filberts among the crowd.

"Come now, you 'll say I used to be a Tory; and some of you, whose faces I know as well as I know the head of my own crab-stick, will say that 's why I 'm a good fellow. But now I 'll tell you something else. It 's for that very reason — that I used to be a Tory, and am a good fellow — that I go along with my nephew here, who is a thorough-going Liberal. For

will anybody here come forward and say, 'A good fellow has no need to tack about and change his road'? No, there's not one of you such a Tom-noddy. What's good for one time is bad for another. If anybody contradicts that, ask him to eat pickled pork when he's thirsty, and to bathe in the Lapp there when the spikes of ice are shooting. And that's the reason why the men who are the best Liberals now are the very men who used to be the best Tories. There is n't a nastier horse than your horse that 'll jib and back and turn round when there is but one road for him to go, and that's the road before him.

"And my nephew here, — he comes of a Tory breed, you know, — I 'll answer for the Lingons. In the old Tory times there was never a pup belonging to a Lingon but would howl if a Whig came near him. The Lingon blood is good, rich, old Tory blood, — like good rich milk, — and that's why, when the right time comes, it throws up a Liberal cream. The best sort of Tory turns to the best sort of Radical. There's plenty of Radical scum, — I say, beware of the scum, and look out for the cream. And here's my nephew, — some of the cream, if there is any; none of your Whigs, none of your painted water that looks as if it ran, and it's standing still all the while; none of your spinning-jenny fellows. A gentleman; but up to all sorts of business. I 'm no fool myself; I 'm forced to wink a good deal, for fear of seeing too much, for a neighbourly man must let himself be cheated a little. But though I 've never been out of my own country, I know

less about it than my nephew does. You may tell what he is, and only look at him. There 's one sort of fellow sees nothing but the end of his own nose, and another sort that sees nothing but the hinder side of the moon ; but my nephew Harold is of another sort ; he sees everything that 's at hitting distance, and he 's not one to miss his mark. A good-looking man in his prime ! Not a greenhorn ; not a shrivelled old fellow, who 'll come to speak to you and find he 's left his teeth at home by mistake. Harold Transome will do you credit ; if anybody says the Radicals are a set of sneaks, Brummagem halfpennies, scamps who want to play pitch-and-toss with the property of the country, you can say, ' Look at the member for North Loamshire ! ' And mind what you 'll hear him say ; he 'll go in for making everything right, — Poor-laws and Charities and Church, — he wants to reform 'em all. Perhaps you 'll say, ' There 's that Parson Lingon talking about Church Reform, — why, he belongs to the Church himself, — he wants reforming too.' Well, well, wait a bit, and you 'll hear by and by that old Parson Lingon is reformed, — shoots no more, cracks his joke no more, has drunk his last bottle : the dogs, the old pointers, will be sorry ; but you 'll hear that the Parson at Little Treby is a new man. That 's what Church Reform is sure to come to before long. So now here are some more nuts for you, lads, and I leave you to listen to your candidate. Here he is, — give him a good hurray ; wave your hats, and I 'll begin. Hurray ! "

Harold had not been quite confident before-

hand as to the good effect of his uncle's introduction; but he was soon reassured. There was no acrid partisanship among the old-fashioned Tories who mustered strong about the Marquis of Granby, and Parson Jack had put them in a good humour. Harold's only interruption came from his own party. The oratorical clerk at the Factory, acting as the tribune of the Dissenting interest, and feeling bound to put questions, might have been troublesome; but his voice being unpleasantly sharp, while Harold's was full and penetrating, the questioning was cried down. Harold's speech "did": it was not of the glib-nonsensical sort, not ponderous, not hesitating, — which is as much as to say that it was remarkable among British speeches. Read in print the next day, perhaps it would be neither pregnant nor conclusive, which is saying no more than that its excellence was not of an abnormal kind, but such as is usually found in the best efforts of eloquent candidates. Accordingly the applause drowned the opposition, and content predominated.

But perhaps the moment of most diffusive pleasure from public speaking is that in which the speech ceases and the audience can turn to commenting on it. The one speech, sometimes uttered under great responsibility as to missiles and other consequences, has given a text to twenty speakers who are under no responsibility. Even in the days of duelling a man was not challenged for being a bore, nor does this quality apparently hinder him from being much invited to dinner, which is the great index of social responsibility in a less barbarous age.

Certainly the crowd in the market-place seemed to experience this culminating enjoyment when the speaking on the platform in front of the Ram had ceased, and there were no less than three orators holding forth from the elevation of chance vehicles, not at all to the prejudice of the talking among those who were on a level with their neighbours. There was little ill-humour among the listeners, for Queen Bess was striking the last quarter before two, and a savoury smell from the inn kitchens inspired them with an agreeable consciousness that the speakers were helping to trifle away the brief time before dinner.

Two or three of Harold's committee had lingered talking to each other on the platform, instead of re-entering; and Jermyn, after coming out to speak to one of them, had turned to the corner near which the carriages were standing, that he might tell the Transomes' coachman to drive round to the side door, and signal to his own coachman to follow. But a dialogue which was going on below induced him to pause, and instead of giving the order, to assume the air of a careless gazer. Christian, whom the attorney had already observed looking out of a window at the Marquis of Granby, was talking to Dominic. The meeting appeared to be one of new recognition, for Christian was saying, —

"You 've not got gray as I have, Mr. Lenoni; you 're not a day older for the sixteen years. But no wonder you did n't know me; I 'm bleached like a dried bone."

"Not so. It is true I was confused a meenute, — I could put your face nowhere; but af-

ter that, Naples came behind it, and I said, Mr. Creestian. And so you reside at the Manor, and I am at Transome Court."

"Ah! it 's a thousand pities you 're not on our side, else we might have dined together at the Marquis," said Christian. "Eh, could you manage it?" he added languidly, knowing there was no chance of a yes.

"No, — much obliged, — could n't leave the leetle boy. Ahi! Arry, Arry, pinch not poor Moro."

While Dominic was answering, Christian had stared about him, as his manner was when he was being spoken to, and had had his eyes arrested by Esther, who was leaning forward to look at Mr. Harold Transome's extraordinary little gypsy of a son. But happening to meet Christian's stare, she felt annoyed, drew back, and turned away her head, colouring.

"Who are those ladies?" said Christian, in a low tone, to Dominic, as if he had been startled into a sudden wish for this information.

"They are Meester Jermyn's daughters," said Dominic, who knew nothing either of the lawyer's family or of Esther.

Christian looked puzzled a moment or two and was silent.

"Oh, well — *au revoir*," he said, kissing the tips of his fingers, as the coachman, having had Jermyn's order, began to urge on the horses.

"Does he see some likeness in the girl?" thought Jermyn as he turned away. "I wish I had n't invited her to come in the carriage, as it happens."

CHAPTER XX

"Good earthenware pitchers, sir! — of an excellent quaint pattern and sombre colour."

THE market dinner at the Marquis was in high repute in Treby and its neighbourhood. The frequenters of this three-and-sixpenny ordinary liked to allude to it, as men allude to anything which implies that they move in good society, and habitually converse with those who are in the secret of the highest affairs. The guests were not only such rural residents as had driven to market, but some of the most substantial townsmen, who had always assured their wives that business required this weekly sacrifice of domestic pleasure. The poorer farmers, who put up at the Ram, or the Seven Stars, where there was no fish, felt their disadvantage, bearing it modestly or bitterly, as the case might be; and although the Marquis was a Tory house, devoted to Debarry, it was too much to expect that such tenants of the Transomes as had always been used to dine there, should consent to eat a worse dinner, and sit with worse company, because they suddenly found themselves under a Radical landlord, opposed to the political party known as Sir Maxim's. Hence the recent political divisions had not reduced the handsome length of the table at the Marquis; and the many gradations of dignity — from Mr. Wace, the brewer, to the rich butcher from Leek Malton, who

always modestly took the lowest seat, though without the reward of being asked to come up higher — had not been abbreviated by any secessions.

To-day there was an extra table spread for expected supernumeraries, and it was at this that Christian took his place with some of the younger farmers, who had almost a sense of dissipation in talking to a man of his questionable station and unknown experience. The provision was especially liberal, and on the whole the presence of a minority destined to vote for Transome was a ground for joking, which added to the good-humour of the chief talkers. A respectable old acquaintance turned Radical rather against his will was rallied with even greater gusto than if his wife had had twins twice over. The best Trebian Tories were far too sweet-blooded to turn against such old friends, and to make no distinction between them and the Radical, Dissenting, Papistical, Deistical set with whom they never dined, and probably never saw except in their imagination. But the talk was necessarily in abeyance until the more serious business of dinner was ended, and the wine, spirits, and tobacco raised mere satisfaction into beatitude.

Among the frequent though not regular guests, whom every one was glad to see, was Mr. Nolan, the retired London hosier, a wiry old gentleman past seventy, whose square tight forehead, with its rigid hedge of gray hair, whose bushy eyebrows, sharp dark eyes, and remarkable hooked nose, gave a handsome distinction to his face in the midst of rural physiognomies.

He had married a Miss Pendrell early in life, when he was a poor young Londoner, and the match had been thought as bad as ruin by her family; but fifteen years ago he had had the satisfaction of bringing his wife to settle amongst her own friends, and of being received with pride as a brother-in-law, retired from business, possessed of unknown thousands, and of a most agreeable talent for anecdote and conversation generally. No question had ever been raised as to Mr. Nolan's extraction on the strength of his hooked nose or of his name being Baruch. Hebrew names "ran" in the best Saxon families; the Bible accounted for them; and no one among the uplands and hedgerows of that district was suspected of having an Oriental origin unless he carried a pedler's jewel-box. Certainly, whatever genealogical research might have discovered, the worthy Baruch Nolan was so free from any distinctive marks of religious persuasion — he went to church with so ordinary an irregularity, and so often grumbled at the sermon — that there was no ground for classing him otherwise than with good Trebian Churchmen. He was generally regarded as a good-looking old gentleman, and a certain thin eagerness in his aspect was attributed to the life of the metropolis, where narrow space had the same sort of effect on men as on thickly planted trees. Mr. Nolan always ordered his pint of port, which, after he had sipped it a little, was wont to animate his recollections of the Royal Family, and the various ministries which had been contemporary with the successive stages of his prosperity. He was always lis-

tened to with interest: a man who had been born in the year when good old King George came to the throne — who had been acquainted with the nude leg of the Prince Regent, and hinted at private reasons for believing that the Princess Charlotte ought not to have died — had conversational matter as special to his auditors as Marco Polo could have had on his return from Asiatic travel.

"My good sir," he said to Mr. Wace, as he crossed his knees and spread his silk handkerchief over them, "Transome may be returned, or he may not be returned, — that 's a question for North Loamshire; but it makes little difference to the kingdom. I don't want to say things which may put younger men out of spirits, but I believe this country has seen its best days, — I do indeed."

"I am sorry to hear it from one of your experience, Mr. Nolan," said the brewer, a large happy-looking man. "I 'd make a good fight myself before I 'd leave a worse world for my boys than I 've found for myself. There is n't a greater pleasure than doing a bit of planting and improving one's buildings, and investing one's money in some pretty acres of land, when it turns up here and there, — land you 've known from a boy. It 's a nasty thought that these Radicals are to turn things round so as one can calculate on nothing. One does n't like it for one's self, and one does n't like it for one's neighbours. But somehow I believe it won't do: if we can't trust the Government just now, there 's Providence and the good sense of the country; and there 's a right in things, — that 's what I 've

always said, — there 's a right in things. The heavy end will get downmost. And if Church and King, and every man being sure of his own, are things good for this country there 's a God above will take care of 'em."

"It won't do, my dear sir," said Mr. Nolan, — "it won't do. When Peel and the Duke turned round about the Catholics in '29, I saw it was all over with us. We could never trust ministers any more. It was to keep off a rebellion, they said ; but I say it was to keep their places. They 're monstrously fond of place, both of them, — that I know." Here Mr. Nolan changed the crossing of his legs, and gave a deep cough, conscious of having made a point. Then he went on : "What we want is a king with a good will of his own. If we 'd had that, we should n't have heard what we 've heard to-day ; Reform would never have come to this pass. When our good old King George the Third heard his ministers talking about Catholic Emancipation, he boxed their ears all round. Ah, poor soul ! he did indeed, gentlemen," ended Mr. Nolan, shaken by a deep laugh of admiration.

"Well, now, that 's something like a king," said Mr. Crowder, who was an eager listener.

"It was uncivil, though. How did they take it ?" said Mr. Timothy Rose, a "gentleman farmer" from Leek Malton, against whose independent position Nature had provided the safeguard of a spontaneous servility. His large porcine cheeks, round twinkling eyes, and thumbs habitually twirling expressed a concentrated effort not to get into trouble, and to

speak everybody fair except when they were safely out of hearing.

"Take it! they 'd be obliged to take it," said the impetuous young Joyce, a farmer of superior information. "Have you ever heard of the King's prerogative?"

"I don't say but what I have," said Rose, retreating. "I 've nothing against it, — nothing at all."

"No, but the Radicals have," said young Joyce, winking. "The prerogative is what they want to clip close. They want us to be governed by delegates from the trades-unions, who are to dictate to everybody, and make everything square to their mastery."

"They 're a pretty set, now, those delegates," said Mr. Wace, with disgust. "I once heard two of 'em spouting away. They 're a sort of fellow I 'd never employ in my brewery, or anywhere else. I 've seen it again and again. If a man takes to tongue-work, it 's all over with him. 'Everything 's wrong,' says he. That 's a big text. But does he want to make everything right? Not he. He 'd lose his text. 'We want every man's good,' say they. Why, they never knew yet what a man's good is. How should they? It 's working for his victual, — not getting a slice of other people's."

"Ay, ay," said young Joyce, cordially. "I should just have liked all the delegates in the country mustered for our yeomanry to go into, — that 's all. They 'd see where the strength of Old England lay then. You may tell what it is for a country to trust to trade when it breeds such spindling fellows as those."

"That is n't the fault of trade, my good sir," said Mr. Nolan, who was often a little pained by the defects of provincial culture. "Trade, properly conducted, is good for a man's constitution. I could have shown you, in my time, weavers past seventy, with all their faculties as sharp as a pen-knife, doing without spectacles. It 's the new system of trade that 's to blame: a country can't have too much trade if it 's properly managed. Plenty of sound Tories have made their fortune by trade. You 've heard of Calibut & Co., — everybody has heard of Calibut. Well, sir, I knew old Mr. Calibut as well as I know you. He was once a crony of mine in a city warehouse; and now, I 'll answer for it, he has a larger rent-roll than Lord Wyvern. Bless your soul! his subscriptions to charities would make a fine income for a nobleman. And he 's as good a Tory as I am. And as for his town establishment, — why, how much butter do you think is consumed there annually?"

Mr. Nolan paused, and then his face glowed with triumph as he answered his own question: "Why, gentlemen, not less than two thousand pounds of butter during the few months the family is in town! Trade makes property, my good sir, and property is Conservative, as they say now. Calibut's son-in-law is Lord Fortinbras. He paid me a large debt on his marriage. It 's all one web, sir. The prosperity of the country is one web."

"To be sure," said Christian, who, smoking his cigar with his chair turned away from the table, was willing to make himself agreeable in

the conversation. "We can't do without nobility. Look at France. When they got rid of the old nobles, they were obliged to make new."

"True, very true," said Mr. Nolan, who thought Christian a little too wise for his position, but could not resist the rare gift of an instance in point. "It 's the French Revolution that has done us harm here. It was the same at the end of the last century, but the war kept it off, — Mr. Pitt saved us. I knew Mr. Pitt. I had a particular interview with him once. He joked me about getting the length of his foot. 'Mr. Nolan,' said he, 'there are those on the other side of the water whose name begins with N. who would be glad to know what you know.' I was recommended to send an account of that to the newspapers after his death, poor man! but I 'm not fond of that kind of show myself." Mr. Nolan swung his upper leg a little, and pinched his lip between his thumb and finger, naturally pleased with his own moderation.

"No, no, — very right," said Mr. Wace, cordially. "But you never said a truer word than that about property. If a man 's got a bit of property, a stake in the country, he 'll want to keep things square. Where Jack is n't safe, Tom 's in danger. But that 's what makes it such an uncommonly nasty thing that a man like Transome should take up with these Radicals. It 's my belief he does it only to get into Parliament; he 'll turn round when he gets there. Come, Dibbs, there 's something to put you in spirits," added Mr. Wace, raising his voice a little and looking at a guest lower down.

"You 've got to vote for a Radical with one side of your mouth, and make a wry face with the other; but he 'll turn round by and by. As Parson Jack says, he 's got the right sort of blood in him."

"I don't care two straws who I vote for," said Dibbs, sturdily. "I 'm not going to make a wry face. It stands to reason a man should vote for his landlord. My farm 's in good condition, and I 've got the best pasture on the estate. The rot 's never come nigh me. Let them grumble as are on the wrong side of the hedge."

"I wonder if Jermyn 'll bring him in, though," said Mr. Sircome, the great miller. "He 's an uncommon fellow for carrying things through. I know he brought me through that suit about my weir; it cost a pretty penny, but he brought me through."

"It 's a bit of a pill for him, too, having to turn Radical," said Mr. Wace. "They say he counted on making friends with Sir Maximus, by this young one coming home and joining with Mr. Philip."

"But I 'll bet a penny he brings Transome in," said Mr. Sircome. "Folks say he has n't got many votes hereabout; but towards Duffield, and all there, where the Radicals are, everybody 's for him. Eh, Mr. Christian? Come, — you 're at the fountain-head, — what do they say about it now at the Manor?"

When general attention was called to Christian, young Joyce looked down at his own legs and touched the curves of his own hair, as if measuring his own approximation to that correct copy of a gentleman. Mr. Wace turned his

head to listen for Christian's answer with that tolerance of inferiority which becomes men in places of public resort.

"They think it will be a hard run between Transome and Garstin," said Christian. "It depends on Transome's getting plumpers."

"Well, I know I shall not split for Garstin," said Mr. Wace. "It 's nonsense for Debarry's voters to split for a Whig. A man 's either a Tory or not a Tory."

"It seems reasonable there should be one of each side," said Mr. Timothy Rose. "I don't like showing favour either way. If one side can't lower the poor's rates and take off the tithe, let the other try."

"But there 's this in it, Wace," said Mr. Sircome. "I 'm not altogether against the Whigs. For they don't want to go so far as the Radicals do, and when they find they 've slipped a bit too far, they 'll hold on all the tighter. And the Whigs have got the upper hand now, and it 's no use fighting with the current. I run with the —"

Mr. Sircome checked himself, looked furtively at Christian, and, to divert criticism, ended with, — "Eh, Mr. Nolan ?"

"There have been eminent Whigs, sir. Mr. Fox was a Whig," said Mr. Nolan. "Mr. Fox was a great orator. He gambled a good deal. He was very intimate with the Prince of Wales. I 've seen him, and the Duke of York too, go home by daylight with their hats crushed. Mr. Fox was a great leader of Opposition : Government requires an Opposition. The Whigs should always be in opposition, and the Tories on

the ministerial side. That 's what the country used to like. 'The Whigs for salt and mustard, the Tories for meat,' Mr. Gottlib the banker used to say to me. Mr. Gottlib was a worthy man. When there was a great run on Gottlib's bank in '16, I saw a gentleman come in with bags of gold, and say, 'Tell Mr. Gottlib there 's plenty more where that came from.' It stopped the run, gentlemen, — it did indeed."

This anecdote was received with great admiration; but Mr. Sircome returned to the previous question.

"There now, you see, Wace, — it 's right there should be Whigs as well as Tories, — Pitt and Fox, — I 've always heard them go together."

"Well, I don't like Garstin," said the brewer. "I did n't like his conduct about the Canal Company. Of the two, I like Transome best. If a nag is to throw me, I say, let him have some blood."

"As for blood, Wace," said Mr. Salt, the wool-factor, a bilious man, who only spoke when there was a good opportunity of contradicting, "ask my brother-in-law Labron a little about that. These Transomes are not the old blood."

"Well, they 're the oldest that 's forthcoming, I suppose," said Mr. Wace, laughing. "Unless you believe in mad old Tommy Trounsem. I wonder where that old poaching fellow is now."

"I saw him half-drunk the other day," said young Joyce. "He 'd got a flag-basket with hand-bills in it over his shoulder."

"I thought the old fellow was dead," said Mr. Wace. "He! why, Jermyn," he went on merrily, as he turned round and saw the attor-

ney entering; "you Radical! how dare you show yourself in this Tory house? Come, this is going a bit too far. We don't mind Old Harry managing our law for us, — that's his proper business from time immemorial; but — "

"But — a — " said Jermyn, smiling, always ready to carry on a joke, to which his slow manner gave the piquancy of surprise, "if he meddles with politics he must be a Tory."

Jermyn was not afraid to show himself anywhere in Treby. He knew many people were not exactly fond of him; but a man can do without that, if he is prosperous. A provincial lawyer in those old-fashioned days was as independent of personal esteem as if he had been a Lord Chancellor.

There was a good-humoured laugh at this upper end of the room as Jermyn seated himself at about an equal angle between Mr. Wace and Christian.

"We were talking about old Tommy Trounsem; you remember him? They say he's turned up again," said Mr. Wace.

"Ah?" said Jermyn, indifferently. "But — a — Wace — I'm very busy to-day — but I wanted to see you about that bit of land of yours at the corner of Pod's End. I've had a handsome offer for you, — I'm not at liberty to say from whom, — but an offer that ought to tempt you."

"It won't tempt me," said Mr. Wace, peremptorily; "if I've got a bit of land, I'll keep it. It's hard enough to get hereabouts."

"Then I'm to understand that you refuse all negotiation?" said Jermyn, who had ordered a

glass of sherry, and was looking round slowly as he sipped it, till his eyes seemed to rest for the first time on Christian, though he had seen him at once on entering the room.

"Unless one of the confounded railways should come. But then I 'll stand out and make 'em bleed for it."

There was a murmur of approbation; the railways were a public wrong much denunciated in Treby.

"A — Mr. Philip Debarry at the Manor now?" said Jermyn, suddenly questioning Christian, in a haughty tone of superiority which he often chose to use.

"No," said Christian; "he is expected to-morrow morning."

"Ah! —" Jermyn paused a moment or two, and then said, "You are sufficiently in his confidence, I think, to carry a message to him with a small document?"

"Mr. Debarry has often trusted me so far," said Christian, with much coolness; "but if the business is yours, you can probably find some one you know better."

There was a little winking and grimacing among those of the company who heard this answer.

"A — true — a," said Jermyn, not showing any offence; "if you decline. But I think, if you will do me the favour to step round to my residence on your way back, and learn the business, you will prefer carrying it yourself. At my residence, if you please, — not my office."

"Oh, very well," said Christian. "I shall be very happy." Christian never allowed himself

to be treated as a servant by any one but his master, and his master treated a servant more deferentially than an equal.

"Will it be five o'clock? What hour shall we say?" said Jermyn.

Christian looked at his watch and said, "About five I can be there."

"Very good," said Jermyn, finishing his sherry.

"Well — a — Wace — a — so you will hear nothing about Pod's End?"

"Not I."

"A mere pocket-handkerchief, not enough to swear by — a — " here Jermyn's face broke into a smile — "without a magnifying-glass."

"Never mind. It's mine into the bowels of the earth and up to the sky. I can build the Tower of Babel on it if I like, — eh, Mr. Nolan?"

"A bad investment, my good sir," said Mr. Nolan, who enjoyed a certain flavour of infidelity in this smart reply, and laughed much at it in his inward way.

"See now, how blind you Tories are!" said Jermyn, rising; "if I had been your lawyer, I'd have had you make another forty-shilling freeholder with that land, and all in time for this election. But — a — the *verbum sapientibus* comes a little too late now."

Jermyn was moving away as he finished speaking, but Mr. Wace called out after him, "We're not so badly off for votes as you are, — good sound votes, that'll stand the Revising Barrister. Debarry at the top of the poll!"

The lawyer was already out of the doorway.

CHAPTER XXI

'T is grievous that with all amplification of travel both by sea and land, a man can never separate himself from his past history.

MR. JERMYN'S handsome house stood a little way out of the town, surrounded by garden and lawn and plantations of hopeful trees. As Christian approached it he was in a perfectly easy state of mind ; the business he was going on was none of his, otherwise than as he was well satisfied with any opportunity of making himself valuable to Mr. Philip Debarry. As he looked at Jermyn's length of wall and iron railing, he said to himself: "These lawyers are the fellows for getting on in the world with the least expense of civility. With this cursed conjuring secret of theirs called Law, they think everybody is frightened at them. My Lord Jermyn seems to have his insolence as ready as his soft sawder. He 's as sleek as a rat, and has as vicious a tooth. I know the sort of vermin well enough. I 've helped to fatten one or two."

In this mood of conscious, contemptuous penetration, Christian was shown by the footman into Jermyn's private room, where the attorney sat surrounded with massive oaken bookcases, and other furniture to correspond, from the thickest-legged library-table to the calendar frame and card-rack. It was the sort of room a man prepares for himself when he feels sure of a long and respectable future. He was leaning back

in his leather chair, against the broad window opening on the lawn, and had just taken off his spectacles and let the newspaper fall on his knees, in despair of reading by the fading light.

When the footman opened the door and said, "Mr. Christian," Jermyn said, "Good-evening, Mr. Christian. Be seated," pointing to a chair opposite himself and the window. "Light the candles on the shelf, John, but leave the blinds alone."

He did not speak again till the man was gone out, but appeared to be referring to a document which lay on the bureau before him. When the door was closed he drew himself up again, began to rub his hands, and turned towards his visitor, who seemed perfectly indifferent to the fact that the attorney was in shadow, and that the light fell on himself.

"A — your name — a — is Henry Scaddon."

There was a start through Christian's frame which he was quick enough, almost simultaneously, to try and disguise as a change of position. He uncrossed his legs and unbuttoned his coat. But before he had time to say anything, Jermyn went on with slow emphasis.

"You were born on the 16th of December, 1782, at Blackheath. Your father was a cloth-merchant in London; he died when you were barely of age, leaving an extensive business; before you were five-and-twenty you had run through the greater part of the property, and had compromised your safety by an attempt to defraud your creditors. Subsequently you forged a check on your father's elder brother, who had intended to make you his heir."

Here Jermyn paused a moment and referred to the document. Christian was silent.

"In 1808 you found it expedient to leave this country in a military disguise, and were taken prisoner by the French. On the occasion of an exchange of prisoners you had the opportunity of returning to your own country, and to the bosom of your own family. You were generous enough to sacrifice that prospect in favour of a fellow-prisoner, of about your own age and figure, who had more pressing reasons than yourself for wishing to be on this side of the water. You exchanged dress, luggage, and names with him, and he passed to England instead of you as Henry Scaddon. Almost immediately afterwards you escaped from your imprisonment, after feigning an illness which prevented your exchange of names from being discovered; and it was reported that you — that is, you under the name of your fellow-prisoner — were drowned in an open boat, trying to reach a Neapolitan vessel bound for Malta. Nevertheless, I have to congratulate you on the falsehood of that report, and on the certainty that you are now, after the lapse of more than twenty years, seated here in perfect safety."

Jermyn paused so long that he was evidently awaiting some answer. At last Christian replied in a dogged tone, —

"Well, sir, I 've heard much longer stories than that told quite as solemnly, when there was not a word of truth in them. Suppose I deny the very peg you hang your statement on. Suppose I say I am not Henry Scaddon."

"A — in that case — a," said Jermyn, with wooden indifference, "you would lose the advantage which — a — may attach to your possession of Henry Scaddon's knowledge. And at the same time, if it were in the least — a — inconvenient to you that you should be recognized as Henry Scaddon, your denial would not prevent me from holding the knowledge and evidence which I possess on that point; it would only prevent us from pursuing the present conversation."

"Well, sir, suppose we admit, for the sake of the conversation, that your account of the matter is the true one: what advantage have you to offer the man named Henry Scaddon?"

"The advantage — a — is problematical; but it may be considerable. It might, in fact, release you from the necessity of acting as courier, or — a — valet, or whatever other office you may occupy which prevents you from being your own master. On the other hand, my acquaintance with your secret is not necessarily a disadvantage to you. To put the matter in a nutshell, I am not inclined — a — gratuitously — to do you any harm, and I may be able to do you a considerable service."

"Which you want me to earn somehow?" said Christian. "You offer me a turn in a lottery?"

"Precisely. The matter in question is of no earthly interest to you, except — a — as it may yield you a prize. We lawyers have to do with complicated questions, and—a—legal subtleties, which are never — a — fully known even to the parties immediately interested, still less to the

witnesses. Shall we agree, then, that you continue to retain two thirds of the name which you gained by exchange, and that you oblige me by answering certain questions as to the experience of Henry Scaddon?"

"Very good. Go on."

"What articles of property, once belonging to your fellow-prisoner, Maurice Christian Bycliffe, do you still retain?"

"This ring," said Christian, twirling round the fine seal ring on his finger, "his watch, and the little matters that hung with it, and a case of papers. I got rid of a gold snuff-box once when I was hard-up. The clothes are all gone, of course. We exchanged everything; it was all done in a hurry. Bycliffe thought we should meet again in England before long, and he was mad to get there. But that was impossible, — I mean that we should meet soon after. I don't know what's become of him, else I would give him up his papers and the watch, and so on, — though, you know, it was I who did *him* the service, and he felt that."

"You were at Vesoul together before being moved to Verdun?"

"Yes."

"What else do you know about Bycliffe?"

"Oh, nothing very particular," said Christian, pausing, and rapping his boot with his cane. "He 'd been in the Hanoverian army, — a high-spirited fellow, took nothing easily; not over-strong in health. He made a fool of himself with marrying at Vesoul; and there was the devil to pay with the girl's relations; and then, when the prisoners were ordered off, they had

to part. Whether they ever got together again I don't know."

"Was the marriage all right then?"

"Oh, all on the square, — civil marriage, church, — everything. Bycliffe was a fool, — a good-natured, proud, headstrong fellow."

"How long did the marriage take place before you left Vesoul?"

"About three months. I was a witness to the marriage."

"And you know no more about the wife?"

"Not afterwards. I knew her very well before, — pretty Annette — Annette Ledru was her name. She was of a good family, and they had made up a fine match for her. But she was one of your meek little diablesses, who have a will of their own once in their lives, — the will to choose their own master."

"Bycliffe was not open to you about his other affairs?"

"Oh, no, — a fellow you would n't dare to ask a question of. People told him everything, but he told nothing in return. If Madame Annette ever found him again, she found her lord and master with a vengeance; but she was a regular lapdog. However, her family shut her up — made a prisoner of her — to prevent her running away."

"Ah, — good! Much of what you have been so obliging as to say is irrelevant to any possible purpose of mine, which, in fact, has to do only with a mouldy law-case that might be aired some day. You will doubtless, on your own account, maintain perfect silence on what has passed between us, and with that condition

duly preserved — a — it is possible that — a — the lottery you have put into — as you observe — may turn up a prize."

"This, then, is all the business you have with me?" said Christian, rising.

"All. You will, of course, preserve carefully all the papers and other articles which have so many — a — recollections — a — attached to them?"

"Oh, yes. If there 's any chance of Bycliffe turning up again, I shall be sorry to have parted with the snuff-box; but I was hard up at Naples. In fact, as you see, I was obliged at last to turn courier."

"An exceedingly agreeable life for a man of some — a — accomplishments and — a — no income," said Jermyn, rising, and reaching a candle, which he placed against his desk.

Christian knew this was a sign that he was expected to go, but he lingered standing, with one hand on the back of his chair. At last he said rather sulkily, —

"I think you 're too clever, Mr. Jermyn, not to perceive that I 'm not a man to be made a fool of."

"Well — a — it may perhaps be a still better guarantee for you," said Jermyn, smiling, "that I see no use in attempting that — a — metamorphosis."

"The old gentleman, who ought never to have felt himself injured, is dead now, and I 'm not afraid of creditors after more than twenty years."

"Certainly not; — a — there may indeed be claims which can't assert themselves — a — le-

gally, which yet are molesting to a man of some reputation. But you may perhaps be happily free from such fears."

Jermyn drew round his chair towards the bureau; and Christian, too acute to persevere uselessly, said, "Good-day," and left the room.

After leaning back in his chair to reflect a few minutes, Jermyn wrote the following letter: —

Dear Johnson, — I learn from your letter, received this morning, that you intend returning to town on Saturday.

While you are there, be so good as to see Medwin, who used to be with Batt & Cowley, and ascertain from him indirectly, and in the course of conversation on other topics, whether in that old business in 1810–11, Scaddon alias Bycliffe, or Bycliffe alias Scaddon, before his imprisonment, gave Batt & Cowley any reason to believe that he was married and expected to have a child. The question, as you know, is of no practical importance; but I wish to draw up an abstract of the Bycliffe case, and the exact position in which it stood before the suit was closed by the death of the plaintiff, in order that, if Mr. Harold Transome desires it, he may see how the failure of the last claim has secured the Durfey-Transome title, and whether there is a hair's-breadth of chance that another claim should be set up.

Of course there is not a shadow of such a chance. For even if Batt and Cowley were to suppose that they had alighted on a surviving representative of the Bycliffes, it would not enter into their heads to set up a new claim, since they brought evidence that the last life which suspended the Bycliffe remainder was extinct before the case was closed, a good twenty years ago.

Still, I want to show the present heir of the Durfey-Transomes the exact condition of the family title to the estates. So get me an answer from Medwin on the above-mentioned point.

I shall meet you at Duffield next week. We must get

Transome returned. Never mind his having been a little rough the other day, but go on doing what you know is necessary for his interest. His interest is mine, which I need not say is John Johnson's.

Yours faithfully,

MATTHEW JERMYN.

When the attorney had sealed this letter and leaned back in his chair again, he was inwardly saying, —

"Now, Mr. Harold, I shall shut up this affair in a private drawer till you choose to take any extreme measures which will force me to bring it out. I have the matter entirely in my own power. No one but old Lyon knows about the girl's birth. No one but Scaddon can clench the evidence about Bycliffe, and I 've got Scaddon under my thumb. No soul except myself and Johnson, who is a limb of myself, knows that there is one half-dead life which may presently leave the girl a new claim to the Bycliffe heirship. I shall learn through Methurst whether Batt & Cowley knew, through Bycliffe, of this woman having come to England. I shall hold all the threads between my thumb and finger. I can use the evidence or I can nullify it.

"And so, if Mr. Harold pushes me to extremity, and threatens me with Chancery and ruin, I have an opposing threat, which will either save me or turn into a punishment for him."

He rose, put out his candles, and stood with his back to the fire, looking out on the dim lawn, with its black twilight fringe of shrubs, still meditating. Quick thought was gleaming over five-and-thirty years filled with devices more or less clever, more or less desirable to be avowed.

Those which might be avowed with impunity were not always to be distinguished as innocent by comparison with those which it was advisable to conceal. In a profession where much that is noxious may be done without disgrace, is a conscience likely to be without balm when circumstances have urged a man to overstep the line where his good technical information makes him aware that (with discovery) disgrace is likely to begin?

With regard to the Transome affairs, the family had been in pressing need of money, and it had lain with him to get it for them: was it to be expected that he would not consider his own advantage where he had rendered services such as are never fully paid? If it came to a question of right and wrong instead of law, the least justifiable things he had ever done had been done on behalf of the Transomes. It had been a deucedly unpleasant thing for him to get Bycliffe arrested and thrown into prison as Henry Scaddon, — perhaps hastening the man's death in that way. But if it had not been done by dint of his (Jermyn's) exertions and tact, he would like to know where the Durfey-Transomes might have been by this time. As for right or wrong, if the truth were known, the very possession of the estate by the Durfey-Transomes was owing to law-tricks that took place nearly a century ago, when the original old Durfey got his base fee.

But inward argument of this sort now, as always, was merged in anger, in exasperation, that Harold, precisely Harold Transome, should have turned out to be the probable instrument

of a visitation which would be bad luck, not justice; for is there any justice where ninety-nine out of a hundred escape? He felt himself beginning to hate Harold as he had never —

Just then Jermyn's third daughter, a tall slim girl, wrapped in a white woollen shawl, which she had hung over her blanket-wise, skipped across the lawn towards the greenhouse to get a flower. Jermyn was startled, and did not identify the figure, or rather he identified it falsely with another tall white-wrapped figure which had sometimes set his heart beating quickly more than thirty years before. For a moment he was fully back in those distant years when he and another bright-eyed person had seen no reason why they should not indulge their passion and their vanity, and determine for themselves how their lives should be made delightful in spite of unalterable external conditions. The reasons had been unfolding themselves gradually ever since through all the years which had converted the handsome, soft-eyed, slim young Jermyn (with a touch of sentiment) into a portly lawyer of sixty, for whom life had resolved itself into the means of keeping up his head among his professional brethren and maintaining an establishment, — into a gray-haired husband and father, whose third affectionate and expensive daughter now rapped at the window and called to him, "Papa, papa, get ready for dinner; don't you remember that the Lukyns are coming?"

CHAPTER XXII

Her gentle looks shot arrows, piercing him,
As gods are pierced, with poison of sweet pity.

THE evening of the market-day had passed, and Felix had not looked in at Malthouse Yard to talk over the public events with Mr. Lyon. When Esther was dressing the next morning, she had reached a point of irritated anxiety to see Felix, at which she found herself devising little schemes for attaining that end in some way that would be so elaborate as to seem perfectly natural. Her watch had a long-standing ailment of losing; possibly it wanted cleaning; Felix would tell her if it merely wanted regulating, whereas Mr. Prowd might detain it unnecessarily, and cause her useless inconvenience. Or could she not get a valuable hint from Mrs. Holt about the homemade bread, which was something as "sad" as Lyddy herself? Or, if she came home that way at twelve o'clock, Felix might be going out, she might meet him, and not be obliged to call. Or, — but it would be very much beneath her to take any steps of this sort. Her watch had been losing for the last two months, — why should it not go on losing a little longer? She could think of no devices that were not so transparent as to be undignified. All the more undignified because Felix chose to live in a way that would prevent any one from classing him according to his education and mental refine-

ment, — "which certainly are very high," said Esther, inwardly, colouring, as if in answer to some contrary allegation, "else I should not think his opinion of any consequence." But she came to the conclusion that she could not possibly call at Mrs. Holt's.

It followed that up to a few minutes past twelve, when she reached the turning towards Mrs. Holt's, she believed that she should go home the other way; but at the last moment there is always a reason not existing before, — namely, the impossibility of further vacillation. Esther turned the corner without any visible pause, and in another minute was knocking at Mrs. Holt's door, not without an inward flutter, which she was bent on disguising.

"It 's never you, Miss Lyon! who 'd have thought of seeing you at this time? Is the minister ill? I thought he looked creechy. If you want help, I 'll put my bonnet on."

"Don't keep Miss Lyon at the door, mother; ask her to come in," said the ringing voice of Felix, surmounting various small shufflings and babbling voices within.

"It 's my wish for her to come in, I 'm sure," said Mrs. Holt, making way; "but what is there for her to come in to? a floor worse than any public. But step in, pray, if you 're so inclined. When I 've been forced to take my bit of carpet up and have benches, I don't see why I need mind nothing no more."

"I only came to ask Mr. Holt if he would look at my watch for me," said Esther, entering, and blushing a general rose-colour.

"He 'll do that fast enough," said Mrs. Holt,

with emphasis; "that's one of the things he *will* do."

"Excuse my rising, Miss Lyon," said Felix; "I'm binding up Job's finger."

Job was a small fellow about five, with a germinal nose, large round blue eyes, and red hair that curled close to his head like the wool on the back of an infantine lamb. He had evidently been crying, and the corners of his mouth were still dolorous. Felix held him on his knee as he bound and tied up very cleverly a tiny forefinger. There was a table in front of Felix and against the window, covered with his watchmaking implements and some open books. Two benches stood at right angles on the sanded floor, and six or seven boys of various ages up to twelve were getting their caps and preparing to go home. They huddled themselves together and stood still when Esther entered. Felix could not look up till he had finished his surgery, but he went on speaking.

"This is a hero, Miss Lyon. This is Job Tudge, a bold Briton whose finger hurts him, but who does n't mean to cry. Good-morning, boys. Don't lose your time. Get out into the air."

Esther seated herself on the end of the bench near Felix, much relieved that Job was the immediate object of attention; and the other boys rushed out behind her with a brief chant of "Good-morning!"

"Did you ever see," said Mrs. Holt, standing to look on, "how wonderful Felix is at that small work with his large fingers? And that's because he learnt doctoring. It is n't for want

of cleverness he looks like a poor man, Miss Lyon. I 've left off speaking, else I should say it 's a sin and a shame."

"Mother," said Felix, who often amused himself and kept good-humoured by giving his mother answers that were unintelligible to her, "you have an astonishing readiness in the Ciceronian antiphrasis, considering you have never studied oratory. There, Job — thou patient man, — sit still if thou wilt; and now we can look at Miss Lyon."

Esther had taken off her watch and was holding it in her hand. But he looked at her face, or rather at her eyes, as he said, "You want me to doctor your watch?"

Esther's expression was appealing and timid, as it had never been before in Felix's presence; but when she saw the perfect calmness, which to her seemed coldness, of his clear gray eyes, as if he saw no reason for attaching any emphasis to this first meeting, a pang swift as an electric shock darted through her. She had been very foolish to think so much of it. It seemed to her as if her inferiority to Felix made a great gulf between them. She could not at once rally her pride and self-command, but let her glance fall on her watch, and said, rather tremulously, "It loses. It is very troublesome. It has been losing a long while."

Felix took the watch from her hand; then, looking round and seeing that his mother was gone out of the room, he said very gently, —

"You look distressed, Miss Lyon. I hope there is no trouble at home" (Felix was thinking of the minister's agitation on the previous

Sunday). "But I ought perhaps to beg your pardon for saying so much."

Poor Esther was quite helpless. The mortification which had come like a bruise to all the sensibilities that had been in keen activity, insisted on some relief. Her eyes filled instantly, and a great tear rolled down while she said in a loud sort of whisper, as involuntary as her tears, —

"I wanted to tell you that I was not offended, — that I am not ungenerous — I thought you might think — but you have not thought of it."

Was there ever more awkward speaking? — or any behaviour less like that of the graceful, self-possessed Miss Lyon, whose phrases were usually so well turned, and whose repartees were so ready?

For a moment there was silence. Esther had her two little delicately gloved hands clasped on the table. The next moment she felt one hand of Felix covering them both and pressing them firmly; but he did not speak. The tears were both on her cheeks now, and she could look up at him. His eyes had an expression of sadness in them quite new to her. Suddenly little Job, who had his mental exercises on the occasion, called out impatiently, —

"She 's tut her finger!"

Felix and Esther laughed, and drew their hands away; and as Esther took her handkerchief to wipe the tears from her cheeks, she said, —

"You see, Job, I am a naughty coward. I can't help crying when I 've hurt myself."

"Zoo sood n't kuy," said Job, energetically, being much impressed with a moral doctrine which had come to him after a sufficient transgression of it.

"Job is like me," said Felix, "fonder of preaching than of practice. But let us look at this same watch," he went on, opening and examining it. "These little Geneva toys are cleverly constructed to go always a little wrong. But if you wind them up and set them regularly every night, you may know at least that it 's not noon when the hand points there."

Felix chatted, that Esther might recover herself; but now Mrs. Holt came back and apologized.

"You 'll excuse my going away, I know, Miss Lyon. But there were the dumplings to see to, and what little I 've got left on my hands now, I like to do well. Not but what I 've more cleaning to do than ever I had in my life before, as you may tell soon enough if you look at this floor. But when you 've been used to doing things, and they 've been taken away from you, it 's as if your hands had been cut off, and you felt the fingers as are of no use to you."

"That 's a great image, mother," said Felix, as he snapped the watch together, and handed it to Esther; "I never heard you use such an image before."

"Yes, I know you 've always some fault to find with what your mother says. But if ever there was a woman could talk with the open Bible before her, and not be afraid, it 's me. I never did tell stories, and I never will, — though

I know it 's done, Miss Lyon, and by church members too, when they have candles to sell, as I could bring you the proof. But I never was one of 'em, let Felix say what he will about the printing on the tickets. His father believed it was gospel truth, and it 's presumptuous to say it was n't. For as for curing, how can anybody know? There 's no physic 'll cure without a blessing, and *with* a blessing I know I 've seen a mustard plaister work when there was no more smell nor strength in the mustard than so much flour; and reason good, — for the mustard had lain in paper nobody knows how long — so I 'll leave you to guess."

Mrs. Holt looked hard out of the window, and gave a slight inarticulate sound of scorn.

Felix had leaned back in his chair with a resigned smile, and was pinching Job's ears.

Esther said, "I think I had better go now," not knowing what else to say, yet not wishing to go immediately, lest she should seem to be running away from Mrs. Holt. She felt keenly how much endurance there must be for Felix. And she had often been discontented with her father, and called him tiresome!

"Where does Job Tudge live?" she said, still sitting, and looking at the droll little figure, set off by a ragged jacket with a tail about two inches deep sticking out above the funniest of corduroys.

"Job has two mansions," said Felix. "He lives here chiefly; but he has another home, where his grandfather, Mr. Tudge, the stone-breaker, lives. My mother is very good to Job, Miss Lyon. She has made him a little bed,

in a cupboard, and she gives him sweetened porridge."

The exquisite goodness implied in these words of Felix impressed Esther the more, because in her hearing his talk had usually been pungent and denunciatory. Looking at Mrs. Holt, she saw that her eyes had lost their bleak north-easterly expression, and were shining with some mildness on little Job, who had turned round towards her, propping his head against Felix.

"Well, why should n't I be motherly to the child, Miss Lyon?" said Mrs. Holt, whose strong powers of argument required the file of an imagined contradiction, if there were no real one at hand. "I never was hard-hearted, and I never will be. It was Felix picked the child up and took to him, you may be sure, for there 's nobody else master where he is; but I was n't going to beat the orphan child and abuse him because of that, and him as straight as an arrow when he 's stript, and me so fond of children, and only had one of my own to live. I 'd three babies, Miss Lyon; but the blessed Lord only spared Felix, and him the masterfullest and the brownest of 'em all. But I did my duty by him, and I said, he 'll have more schooling than his father, and he 'll grow up a doctor, and marry a woman with money to furnish, — as I was myself, spoons and everything, — and I shall have the grandchildren to look up to me, and be drove out in the gig sometimes, like old Mrs. Lukyn. And you see what it 's all come to, Miss Lyon: here 's Felix made a common man of himself, and says he 'll never be married, —

which is the most unreasonable thing, and him never easy but when he 's got the child on his lap, or when — "

" Stop, stop, mother," Felix burst in ; " pray don't use that limping argument again, — that a man should marry because he 's fond of children. That 's a reason for not marrying. A bachelor's children are always young; they 're immortal children, — always lisping, waddling, helpless, and with a chance of turning out good."

" The Lord above may know what you mean ! And have n't other folk's children a chance of turning out good ? "

" Oh, they grow out of it very fast. Here 's Job Tudge now," said Felix, turning the little one round on his knee, and holding his head by the back, — " Job's limbs will get lanky ; this little fist that looks like a puff-ball and can hide nothing bigger than a gooseberry, will get large and bony, and perhaps want to clutch more than its share ; these wide blue eyes that tell me more truth than Job knows, will narrow and narrow and try to hide truth that Job would be better without knowing ; this little negative nose will become long and self-asserting ; and this little tongue — put out thy tongue, Job ! " — Job, awe-struck under this ceremony, put out a little red tongue very timidly — " this tongue, hardly bigger than a rose-leaf, will get large and thick, wag out of season, do mischief, brag and cant for gain or vanity, and cut as cruelly, for all its clumsiness, as if it were a sharp-edged blade. Big Job will perhaps be naughty — " As Felix, speaking with the loud emphatic distinctness habitual to him, brought out this terribly famil-

iar word, Job's sense of mystification became too painful; he hung his lip and began to cry.

"See there," said Mrs. Holt, "you 're frightening the innicent child with such talk, — and it 's enough to frighten them that think themselves the safest."

"Look here, Job, my man," said Felix, setting the boy down and turning him towards Esther; "go to Miss Lyon, ask her to smile at you, and that will dry up your tears like the sunshine."

Job put his two brown fists on Esther's lap, and she stooped to kiss him. Then holding his face between her hands, she said: "Tell Mr. Holt we don't mean to be naughty, Job. He should believe in us more. But now I must really go home."

Esther rose and held out her hand to Mrs. Holt, who kept it while she said, a little to Esther's confusion, —

"I am very glad it 's took your fancy to come here sometimes, Miss Lyon. I know you 're thought to hold your head high, but I speak of people as I find 'em. And I 'm sure anybody had need be humble that comes where there 's a floor like this, — for I 've put by my best tea-trays, they 're so out of all charicter, — I must look Above for comfort now; but I don't say I 'm not worthy to be called on for all that."

Felix had risen and moved towards the door, that he might open it and shield Esther from more last words on his mother's part.

"Good-by, Mr. Holt."

"Will Mr. Lyon like me to sit with him an hour this evening, do you think?"

"Why not? He always likes to see you."

"Then I will come. Good-by."

"She 's a very straight figure," said Mrs. Holt. "How she carries herself! But I doubt there 's some truth in what our people say. If she won't look at young Muscat, it 's the better for *him*. He 'd need have a big fortune that marries her."

"That 's true, mother," said Felix, sitting down, snatching up little Job, and finding a vent for some unspeakable feeling in the pretence of worrying him.

Esther was rather melancholy as she went home, yet happier withal than she had been for many days before. She thought: "I need not mind having shown so much anxiety about his opinion. He is too clear-sighted to mistake our mutual position; he is quite above putting a false interpretation on what I have done. Besides, he had not thought of me at all, — I saw that plainly enough. Yet he was very kind. There is something greater and better in him than I had imagined. His behaviour to-day — to his mother and me too, — I should call it the highest gentlemanliness, only it seems in him to be something deeper. But he has chosen an intolerable life; though I suppose, if I had a mind equal to his, and if he loved me very dearly, I should choose the same life."

Esther felt that she had prefixed an impossible "if" to that result. But now she had known Felix, her conception of what a happy love must be had become like a dissolving view, in which the once-clear images were gradually melting into new forms and new colours. The favourite Byronic heroes were beginning to look some-

thing like last night's decorations seen in the sober dawn. So fast does a little leaven spread within us, — so incalculable is the effect of one personality on another. Behind all Esther's thoughts, like an unacknowledged yet constraining presence, there was the sense that if Felix Holt were to love her, her life would be exalted into something quite new, — into a sort of difficult blessedness, such as one may imagine in beings who are conscious of painfully growing into the possession of higher powers.

It was quite true that Felix had not thought the more of Esther because of that Sunday afternoon's interview which had shaken her mind to the very roots. He had avoided intruding on Mr. Lyon without special reason, because he believed the minister to be preoccupied with some private care. He had thought a great deal of Esther with a mixture of strong disapproval and strong liking, which both together made a feeling the reverse of indifference; but he was not going to let her have any influence on his life. Even if his determination had not been fixed, he would have believed that she would utterly scorn him in any other light than that of an acquaintance, and the emotion she had shown to-day did not change that belief. But he was deeply touched by this manifestation of her better qualities, and felt that there was a new tie of friendship between them. That was the brief history Felix would have given of his relation to Esther. And he was accustomed to observe himself. But very close and diligent looking at living creatures, even

through the best microscope, will leave room for new and contradictory discoveries.

Felix found Mr. Lyon particularly glad to talk to him. The minister had never yet disburthened himself about his letter to Mr. Philip Debarry concerning the public conference ; and as by this time he had all the heads of his discussion thoroughly in his mind, it was agreeable to recite them, as well as to express his regret that time had been lost by Mr. Debarry's absence from the Manor, which had prevented the immediate fulfilment of his pledge.

"I don't see how he can fulfil it if the Rector refuses," said Felix, thinking it well to moderate the little man's confidence.

"The Rector is of a spirit that will not incur earthly impeachment, and he cannot refuse what is necessary to his nephew's honourable discharge of an obligation," said Mr. Lyon. "My young friend, it is a case wherein the prearranged conditions tend by such a beautiful fitness to the issue I have sought, that I should have forever held myself a traitor to my charge had I neglected the indication."

CHAPTER XXIII

I will not excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be admitted; there's no excuse shall serve; you shall not be excused. — *Henry IV.*

WHEN Philip Debarry had come home that morning and read the letters which had not been forwarded to him, he laughed so heartily at Mr. Lyon's that he congratulated himself on being in his private room. Otherwise his laughter would have awakened the curiosity of Sir Maximus, and Philip did not wish to tell any one the contents of the letter until he had shown them to his uncle. He determined to ride over to the Rectory to lunch ; for as Lady Mary was away, he and his uncle might be *tête-à-tête.*

The Rectory was on the other side of the river, close to the church, of which it was the fitting companion ; a fine old brick-and-stone house, with a great bow-window opening from the library on to the deep-turfed lawn, one fat dog sleeping on the door-stone, another fat dog waddling on the gravel, the autumn leaves duly swept away, the lingering chrysanthemums cherished, tall trees stooping or soaring in the most picturesque variety, and a Virginian creeper turning a little rustic hut into a scarlet pavilion. It was one of those rectories which are among the bulwarks of our venerable institutions, — which arrest disintegrating doubt, serve as a double embankment against Popery and Dis-

sent, and rally feminine instinct and affection to reinforce the decisions of masculine thought.

"What makes you look so merry, Phil?" said the Rector, as his nephew entered the pleasant library.

"Something that concerns you," said Philip, taking out the letter. "A clerical challenge. Here's an opportunity for you to emulate the divines of the sixteenth century and have a theological duel. Read this letter."

"What answer have you sent the crazy little fellow?" said the Rector, keeping the letter in his hand and running over it again and again, with brow knit, but eyes gleaming without any malignity.

"Oh, I sent no answer. I awaited yours."

"Mine!" said the Rector, throwing down the letter on the table. "You don't suppose I'm going to hold a public debate with a schismatic of that sort? I should have an infidel shoemaker next expecting me to answer blasphemies delivered in bad grammar."

"But you see how he puts it," said Philip. With all his gravity of nature he could not resist a slightly mischievous prompting, though he had a serious feeling that he should not like to be regarded as failing to fulfil his pledge. "I think if you refuse, I shall be obliged to offer myself."

"Nonsense! Tell him he is himself acting a dishonourable part in interpreting your words as a pledge to do any preposterous thing that suits his fancy. Suppose he had asked you to give him land to build a chapel on; doubtless that would have given him a 'lively satisfaction.'

A man who puts a non-natural strained sense on a promise is no better than a robber."

"But he has not asked for land. I dare say he thinks you won't object to his proposal. I confess there 's a simplicity and quaintness about the letter that rather pleases me."

"Let me tell you, Phil, he 's a crazy little firefly, that does a great deal of harm in my parish. He inflames the Dissenters' minds on politics. There 's no end to the mischief done by these busy prating men. They make the ignorant multitude the judges of the largest questions, both political and religious, till we shall soon have no institution left that is not on a level with the comprehension of a huckster or a drayman. There can be nothing more retrograde, — losing all the results of civilization, all the lessons of Providence, — letting the windlass run down after men have been turning at it painfully for generations. If the instructed are not to judge for the uninstructed, why, let us set Dick Stubbs to make our almanacs, and have a President of the Royal Society elected by universal suffrage."

The Rector had risen, placed himself with his back to the fire, and thrust his hands in his pockets, ready to insist further on this wide argument. Philip sat nursing one leg, listening respectfully, as he always did, though often listening to the sonorous echo of his own statements, which suited his uncle's needs so exactly that he did not distinguish them from his old impressions.

"True," said Philip, "but in special cases we have to do with special conditions. You know

I defend the casuists. And it may happen that for the honour of the Church in Treby and a little also for my honour, circumstances may demand a concession even to some notions of a Dissenting preacher."

"Not at all. I should be making a figure which my brother clergy might well take as an affront to themselves. The character of the Establishment has suffered enough already through the Evangelicals, with their extempore incoherence and their pipe-smoking piety. Look at Wimple, the man who is vicar of Shuttleton, — without his gown and bands, anybody would take him for a grocer in mourning."

"Well, I shall cut a still worse figure, and so will you, in the Dissenting magazines and newspapers. It will go the round of the kingdom. There will be a paragraph headed 'Tory Falsehood and Clerical Cowardice,' or else 'The Meanness of the Aristocracy and the Incompetence of the Beneficed Clergy.'"

"There would be a worse paragraph if I were to consent to the debate. Of course it would be said that I was beaten hollow, and that now the question had been cleared up at Treby Magna, the Church had not a sound leg to stand on. Besides," the Rector went on, frowning and smiling, "it's all very well for you to talk, Phil, but this debating is not so easy when a man's close upon sixty. What one writes or says must be something good and scholarly; and after all had been done, this little Lyon would buzz about one like a wasp, and cross-question and rejoin. Let me tell you, a plain truth may be so worried and mauled by

fallacies as to get the worst of it. There 's no such thing as tiring a talking machine like Lyon."

"Then you absolutely refuse ?"

"Yes, I do."

"You remember that when I wrote my letter of thanks to Lyon you approved my offer to serve him if possible."

"Certainly I remember it. But suppose he had asked you to vote for civil marriage, or to go and hear him preach every Sunday ?"

"But he has not asked that."

"Something as unreasonable, though."

"Well," said Philip, taking up Mr. Lyon's letter and looking graver, looking even vexed, "it is rather an unpleasant business for me. I really felt obliged to him. I think there 's a sort of worth in the man beyond his class. Whatever may be the reason of the case, I shall disappoint him instead of doing him the service I offered."

"Well, that 's a misfortune ; we can't help it."

"The worst of it is, I should be insulting him to say, ' I will do anything else, but not just this that you want.' He evidently feels himself in company with Luther and Zwingle and Calvin, and considers our letters part of the history of Protestantism."

"Yes, yes. I know it 's rather an unpleasant thing, Phil. You are aware that I would have done anything in reason to prevent you from becoming unpopular here. I consider your character a possession to all of us."

"I think I must call on him forthwith and explain and apologize."

"No, sit still; I've thought of something," said the Rector, with a sudden revival of spirits. "I've just seen Sherlock coming in. He is to lunch with me to-day. It would do no harm for him to hold the debate, — a curate and a young man, — he'll gain by it; and it would release you from any awkwardness, Phil. Sherlock is not going to stay here long, you know; he'll soon have his title. I'll put the thing to him. He won't object if I wish it. It's a capital idea. It will do Sherlock good. He's a clever fellow, but he wants confidence."

Philip had not time to object before Mr. Sherlock appeared, — a young divine of good birth and figure, of sallow complexion and bashful address.

"Sherlock, you have come in most opportunely," said the Rector. "A case has turned up in the parish in which you can be of eminent use. I know that is what you have desired ever since you have been with me. But I'm about so much myself that there really has not been sphere enough for you. You are a studious man, I know; I dare say you have all the necessary matter prepared, — at your finger-ends, if not on paper."

Mr. Sherlock smiled with rather a trembling lip, willing to distinguish himself, but hoping that the Rector only alluded to a dialogue on Baptism by Aspersion, or some other pamphlet suited to the purposes of the Christian Knowledge Society. But as the Rector proceeded to unfold the circumstances under which his eminent service was to be rendered, he grew more and more nervous.

"You 'll oblige me very much, Sherlock," the Rector ended, "by going into this thing zealously. Can you guess what time you will require, because it will rest with us to fix the day?"

"I should be rejoiced to oblige you, Mr. Debarry, but I really think I am not competent to —"

"That 's your modesty, Sherlock. Don't let me hear any more of that. I know Filmore of Corpus said you might be a first-rate man if your diffidence did n't do you injustice. And you can refer anything to me, you know. Come, you will set about the thing at once. But, Phil, you must tell the preacher to send a scheme of the debate, — all the different heads, — and he must agree to keep rigidly within the scheme. There, sit down at my desk and write the letter now; Thomas shall carry it."

Philip sat down to write; and the Rector, with his firm ringing voice, went on at his ease, giving "indications" to his agitated curate.

"But you can begin at once preparing a good, cogent, clear statement, and considering the probable points of assault. You can look into Jewel, Hall, Hooker, Whitgift, and the rest: you'll find them all here. My library wants nothing in English divinity. Sketch the lower ground taken by Usher and those men, but bring all your force to bear on marking out the true High-Church doctrine. Expose the wretched cavils of the Nonconformists, and the noisy futility that belongs to schismatics generally. I will give you a telling passage from

Burke on the Dissenters, and some good quotations which I brought together in two sermons of my own on the Position of the English Church in Christendom. How long do you think it will take you to bring your thoughts together? You can throw them afterwards into the form of an essay; we 'll have the thing printed; it will do you good with the Bishop."

With all Mr. Sherlock's timidity, there was fascination for him in this distinction. He reflected that he could take coffee and sit up late, and perhaps produce something rather fine. It might be a first step towards that eminence which it was no more than his duty to aspire to. Even a polemical fame like that of a Philpotts must have had a beginning. Mr. Sherlock was not insensible to the pleasure of turning sentences successfully, and it was a pleasure not always unconnected with preferment. A diffident man likes the idea of doing something remarkable, which will create belief in him without any immediate display of brilliancy. Celebrity may blush and be silent, and win a grace the more. Thus Mr. Sherlock was constrained, trembling all the while, and much wishing that his essay were already in print.

"I think I could hardly be ready under a fortnight."

"Very good. Just write that, Phil, and tell him to fix the precise day and place. And then we 'll go to lunch."

The Rector was quite satisfied. He had talked himself into thinking that he should like to give Sherlock a few useful hints, look up his own earlier sermons, and benefit the Curate by

his criticism, when the argument had been got into shape. He was a healthy-natured man, but that was not at all a reason why he should not have those sensibilities to the odour of authorship which belong to almost everybody who is not expected to be a writer, — and especially to that form of authorship which is called suggestion, and consists in telling another man that he might do a great deal with a given subject by bringing a sufficient amount of knowledge, reasoning, and wit to bear upon it.

Philip would have had some twinges of conscience about the Curate, if he had not guessed that the honour thrust upon him was not altogether disagreeable. The Church might perhaps have had a stronger supporter; but for himself, he had done what he was bound to do: he had done his best towards fulfilling Mr. Lyon's desire.

CHAPTER XXIV

If he come not, the play is marred.
Midsummer Night's Dream.

RUFUS LYON was very happy on that mild November morning appointed for the great conference in the larger room at the Free School, between himself and the Rev. Theodore Sherlock, B. A. The disappointment of not contending with the Rector in person, which had at first been bitter, had been gradually lost sight of in the positive enjoyment of an opportunity for debating on any terms. Mr. Lyon had two grand elements of pleasure on such occasions, — confidence in the strength of his case, and confidence in his own power of advocacy. Not — to use his own phrase — not that he "glorified himself herein;" for speech and exposition were so easy to him that if he argued forcibly, he believed it to be simply because the truth was forcible. He was not proud of moving easily in his native medium. A panting man thinks of himself as a clever swimmer; but a fish swims much better, and takes his performance as a matter of course.

Whether Mr. Sherlock were that panting, self-gratulating man, remained a secret. Philip Debarry, much occupied with his electioneering affairs, had only once had an opportunity of asking his uncle how Sherlock got on; and the Rector had said curtly: "I think he'll do. I've supplied him well with references. I advise

him to read only, and decline everything else as out of order. Lyon will speak to a point, and then Sherlock will read; it will be all the more telling. It will give variety." But on this particular morning peremptory business connected with the magistracy called the Rector away.

Due notice had been given, and the feminine world of Treby Magna was much more agitated by the prospect than by that of any candidate's speech. Mrs. Pendrell at the Bank, Mrs. Tiliot, and the Church ladies generally, felt bound to hear the Curate, who was known, apparently by an intuition concerning the nature of curates, to be a very clever young man; and he would show them what learning had to say on the right side. One or two Dissenting ladies were not without emotion at the thought that, seated on the front benches, they should be brought near to old Church friends, and have a longer greeting than had taken place since the Catholic Emancipation. Mrs. Muscat, who had been a beauty, and was as nice in her millinery as any Trebian lady belonging to the Establishment, reflected that she should put on her best large embroidered collar, and that she should ask Mrs. Tiliot where it was in Duffield that she once got her bed-hangings dyed so beautifully. When Mrs. Tiliot was Mary Salt, the two ladies had been bosom friends; but Mr. Tiliot had looked higher and higher since his gin had become so famous; and in the year '29 he had, in Mr. Muscat's hearing, spoken of Dissenters as sneaks, — a personality which could not be overlooked.

The debate was to begin at eleven; for the

Rector would not allow the evening to be chosen, when low men and boys might want to be admitted out of mere mischief. This was one reason why the female part of the audience outnumbered the males. But some chief Trebians were there, even men whose means made them as independent of theory as Mr. Pendrell and Mr. Wace; encouraged by reflecting that they were not in a place of worship, and would not be obliged to stay longer than they chose. There was a muster of all Dissenters who could spare the morning time, and on the back benches were all the aged Churchwomen who shared the remnants of the sacrament wine, and who were humbly anxious to neglect nothing ecclesiastical or connected with "going to a better place."

At eleven the arrival of listeners seemed to have ceased. Mr. Lyon was seated on the school tribune or daïs at his particular round table; another round table, with a chair, awaited the Curate, with whose superior position it was quite in keeping that he should not be first on the ground. A couple of extra chairs were placed farther back, and more than one important personage had been requested to act as chairman; but no churchman would place himself in a position so equivocal as to dignity of aspect, and so unequivocal as to the obligation of sitting out the discussion; and the Rector had beforehand put a veto on any Dissenting chairman.

Mr. Lyon sat patiently absorbed in his thoughts, with his notes in minute handwriting lying before him, seeming to look at the audience, but not seeing them. Every one else was

contented that there should be an interval in which there could be a little neighbourly talk.

Esther was particularly happy, seated on a side-bench near her father's side of the tribune, with Felix close behind her, so that she could turn her head and talk to him. He had been very kind ever since that morning when she had called at his home, more disposed to listen indulgently to what she had to say, and less blind to her looks and movements. If he had never railed at her or ignored her, she would have been less sensitive to the attention he gave her; but as it was, the prospect of seeing him seemed to light up her life, and to disperse the old dulness. She looked unusually charming to-day, from the very fact that she was not vividly conscious of anything but of having a mind near her that asked her to be something better than she actually was. The consciousness of her own superiority amongst the people around her was superseded, and even a few brief weeks had given a softened expression to her eyes, a more feminine beseechingness and self-doubt to her manners. Perhaps, however, a little new defiance was rising in place of the old contempt, — defiance of the Trebian views concerning Felix Holt.

"What a very nice-looking young woman your minister's daughter is!" said Mrs. Tiliot in an undertone to Mrs. Muscat, who, as she had hoped, had found a seat next to her quondam friend, — "quite the lady."

"Rather too much so, considering," said Mrs. Muscat. "She 's thought proud, and that 's not pretty in a girl, even if there was anything

to back it up. But now she seems to be encouraging that young Holt, who scoffs at everything, as you may judge by his appearance. She has despised his betters before now; but I leave you to judge whether a young man who has taken to low ways of getting his living can pay for fine cambric handkerchiefs and light kid gloves."

Mrs. Muscat lowered her blond eyelashes, and swayed her neat head just perceptibly from side to side, with a sincere desire to be moderate in her expressions, notwithstanding any shock that facts might have given her.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Tiliot. "What! that is young Holt leaning forward now without a cravat? I've never seen him before to notice him, but I've heard Tiliot talking about him. They say he's a dangerous character, and goes stirring up the working-men at Sproxton. And — well, to be sure, such great eyes and such a great head of hair, — it is enough to frighten one. What can she see in him? Quite below her."

"Yes, and brought up a governess," said Mrs. Muscat; "you'd have thought she'd know better how to choose. But the minister has let her get the upper hand sadly too much. It's a pity in a man of God. I don't deny he's *that*."

"Well, I am sorry," said Mrs. Tiliot, "for I meant her to give my girls lessons when they came from school."

Mr. Wace and Mr. Pendrell meanwhile were standing up and looking round at the audience, nodding to their fellow-townspeople with the affability due from men in their position.

"It 's time he came now," said Mr. Wace, looking at his watch and comparing it with the schoolroom clock. "This debating is a new-fangled sort of thing; but the Rector would never have given in to it if there had n't been good reasons. Nolan said he would n't come. He says this debating is an atheistical sort of thing; the Atheists are very fond of it. Theirs is a bad book to take a leaf out of. However, we shall hear nothing but what 's good from Mr. Sherlock. He preaches a capital sermon, — for such a young man."

"Well, it was our duty to support him, — not to leave him alone among the Dissenters," said Mr. Pendrell. "You see, everybody has n't felt that. Labron might have shown himself, if not Lukyn. I could have alleged business myself if I had thought proper."

"Here he comes, I think," said Mr. Wace, turning round on hearing a movement near the small door on a level with the platform. "By George! it 's Mr. Debarry. Come now, this is handsome."

Mr. Wace and Mr. Pendrell clapped their hands, and the example was followed even by most of the Dissenters. Philip was aware that he was doing a popular thing, of a kind that Treby was not used to from the elder Debarrys; but his appearance had not been long premeditated. He was driving through the town towards an engagement at some distance, but on calling at Labron's office he had found that the affair which demanded his presence had been deferred, and so had driven round to the Free School. Christian came in behind him.

Mr. Lyon was now roused from his abstraction, and, stepping from his slight elevation, begged Mr. Debarry to act as moderator or president on the occasion.

"With all my heart," said Philip. "But Mr. Sherlock has not arrived, apparently?"

"He tarries somewhat unduly," said Mr. Lyon. "Nevertheless there may be a reason of which we know not. Shall I collect the thoughts of the assembly by a brief introductory address in the interval?"

"No, no, no," said Mr. Wace, who saw a limit to his powers of endurance. "Mr. Sherlock is sure to be here in a minute or two."

"Christian," said Philip Debarry, who felt a slight misgiving, "just be so good — But stay, I 'll go myself. Excuse me, gentlemen: I 'll drive round to Mr. Sherlock's lodgings. He may be under a little mistake as to the time. Studious men are sometimes rather absent. You need n't come with me, Christian."

As Mr. Debarry went out, Rufus Lyon stepped on to the tribune again in rather an uneasy state of mind. A few ideas had occurred to him, eminently fitted to engage the audience profitably, and so to wrest some edification out of an unforeseen delay. But his native delicacy made him feel that in this assembly the Church people might fairly decline any "deliverance" on his part which exceeded the programme, and Mr. Wace's negative had been energetic. But the little man suffered from imprisoned ideas, and was as restless as a racer held in. He could not sit down again, but walked backwards and forwards, stroking his chin, emitting his low gut-

tural interjection under the pressure of clauses and sentences which he longed to utter aloud, as he would have done in his own study. There was a low buzz in the room which helped to deepen the minister's sense that the thoughts within him were as divine messengers unheeded or rejected by a trivial generation. Many of the audience were standing; all, except the old Churchwomen on the back seats, and a few devout Dissenters who kept their eyes shut and gave their bodies a gentle oscillating motion, were interested in chat.

"Your father is uneasy," said Felix to Esther.

"Yes; and now, I think, he is feeling for his spectacles. I hope he has not left them at home: he will not be able to see anything two yards before him without them; and it makes him so unconscious of what people expect or want."

"I'll go and ask him whether he has them," said Felix, striding over the form in front of him, and approaching Mr. Lyon, whose face showed a gleam of pleasure at this relief from his abstracted isolation.

"Miss Lyon is afraid that you are at a loss for your spectacles, sir," said Felix.

"My dear young friend," said Mr. Lyon, laying his hand on Felix Holt's fore-arm, which was about on a level with the minister's shoulder, "it is a very glorious truth, albeit made somewhat painful to me by the circumstances of the present moment, that as a counterpoise to the brevity of our mortal life (wherein, as I apprehend, our powers are being trained not only for the transmission of an improved heritage, as I

have heard you insist, but also for our own entrance into a higher initiation in the Divine scheme) — it is, I say, a very glorious truth, that even in what are called the waste minutes of our time, like those of expectation, the soul may soar and range, as in some of our dreams which are brief as a broken rainbow in duration, yet seem to comprise a long history of terror or of joy. And again, each moment may be a beginning of a new spiritual energy; and our pulse would doubtless be a coarse and clumsy notation of the passage from that which was not to that which is, even in the finer processes of the material world, — and how much more — "

Esther was watching her father and Felix, and though she was not within hearing of what was being said, she guessed the actual state of the case, — that the inquiry about the spectacles had been unheeded, and that her father was losing himself and embarrassing Felix in the intricacies of a dissertation. There was not the stillness around her that would have made a movement on her part seem conspicuous, and she was impelled by her anxiety to step on the tribune and walk up to her father, who paused, a little startled.

"Pray see whether you have forgotten your spectacles, father. If so, I will go home at once and look for them."

Mr. Lyon was automatically obedient to Esther, and he began immediately to feel in his pockets.

"How is it that Miss Jermyn is so friendly with the Dissenting parson?" said Christian to Quorlen, the Tory printer, who was an intimate

of his. "Those grand Jermyns are not Dissenters surely?"

"*What* Miss Jermyn?"

"Why, — don't you see? — that fine girl who is talking to him."

"Miss Jermyn! Why, that 's the little parson's daughter."

"His daughter!" Christian gave a low brief whistle, which seemed a natural expression of surprise that "the rusty old ranter" should have a daughter of such distinguished appearance.

Meanwhile the search for the spectacles had proved vain. "'T is a grievous fault in me, my dear," said the little man, humbly; "I become thereby sadly burthensome to you."

"I will go at once," said Esther, refusing to let Felix go instead of her. But she had scarcely stepped off the tribune when Mr. Debarry reentered, and there was a commotion which made her wait. After a low-toned conversation with Mr. Pendrell and Mr. Wace, Philip Debarry stepped on to the tribune with his hat in his hand, and said, with an air of much concern and annoyance, —

"I am sorry to have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that — doubtless owing to some accidental cause which I trust will soon be explained as nothing serious, — Mr. Sherlock is absent from his residence, and is not to be found. He went out early, his landlady informs me, to refresh himself by a walk on this agreeable morning, as is his habit, she tells me, when he has been kept up late by study; and he has not returned. Do not let us be too anxious. I shall cause inquiry to be made in the direction

of his walk. It is easy to imagine many accidents, not of a grave character, by which he might nevertheless be absolutely detained against his will. Under these circumstances, Mr. Lyon," continued Philip, turning to the minister, "I presume that the debate must be adjourned."

"The debate, doubtless," began Mr. Lyon; but his further speech was drowned by a general rising of the Church people from their seats, many of them feeling that even if the cause were lamentable, the adjournment was not altogether disagreeable.

"Good gracious me!" said Mrs. Tiliot, as she took her husband's arm, "I hope the poor young man has n't fallen into the river or broken his leg."

But some of the more acrid Dissenters, whose temper was not controlled by the habits of retail business, had begun to hiss, implying that in their interpretation the Curate's absence had not depended on any injury to life or limb.

"He 's turned tail, sure enough," said Mr. Muscat to the neighbour behind him, lifting his eyebrows and shoulders, and laughing in a way that showed that, deacon as he was, he looked at the affair in an entirely secular light.

But Mrs. Muscat thought it would be nothing but right to have all the waters dragged, agreeing in this with the majority of the Church ladies.

"I regret sincerely, Mr. Lyon," said Philip Debarry, addressing the minister with politeness, "that I must say good-morning to you, with the sense that I have not been able at present

to contribute to your satisfaction as I had wished."

"Speak not of it in the way of apology, sir," said Mr. Lyon, in a tone of depression. "I doubt not that you yourself have acted in good faith. Nor will I open any door of egress to constructions such as anger often deems ingenious, but which the disclosure of the simple truth may expose as erroneous and uncharitable fabrications. I wish you good-morning, sir."

When the room was cleared of the Church people, Mr. Lyon wished to soothe his own spirit and that of his flock by a few reflections introductory to a parting prayer. But there was a general resistance to this effort. The men mustered round the minister, and declared their opinion that the whole thing was disgraceful to the Church. Some said the Curate's absence had been contrived from the first. Others more than hinted that it had been a folly in Mr. Lyon to set on foot any procedure in common with Tories and clergymen, who, if they ever aped civility to Dissenters, would never do anything but laugh at them in their sleeves. Brother Kemp urged in his heavy bass that Mr. Lyon should lose no time in sending an account of the affair to the "Patriot;" and Brother Hawkins, in his high tenor, observed that it was an occasion on which some stinging things might be said with all the extra effect of an *âpropos*.

The position of receiving a many-voiced lecture from the members of his church was familiar to Mr. Lyon; but now he felt weary, frustrated, and doubtful of his own temper. Felix, who

stood by and saw that this man of sensitive fibre was suffering from talkers whose noisy superficiality cost them nothing, got exasperated. "It seems to me, sirs," he burst in, with his predominant voice, "that Mr. Lyon has hitherto had the hard part of the business, while you of his congregation have had the easy one. Punish the Church clergy, if you like, — they can take care of themselves. But don't punish your own minister. It 's no business of mine, perhaps, except so far as fair-play is everybody's business; but it seems to me the time to ask Mr. Lyon to take a little rest, instead of setting on him like so many wasps."

By this speech Felix raised a displeasure which fell on the minister as well as on himself; but he gained his immediate end. The talkers dropped off after a slight show of persistence, and Mr. Lyon quitted the field of no combat with a small group of his less imperious friends, to whom he confided his intention of committing his argument fully to paper, and forwarding it to a discriminating editor.

"But regarding personalities," he added, "I have not the same clear showing. For, say that this young man was pusillanimous, — I were but ill provided with arguments if I took my stand even for a moment on so poor an irrelevancy as that because one curate is ill-furnished therefore Episcopacy is false. If I held up any one to just obloquy, it would be the well-designated Incumbent of this parish, who, calling himself one of the Church militant, sends a young and weak-kneed substitute to take his place in the fight."

Mr. Philip Debarry did not neglect to make industrious inquiry concerning the accidents which had detained the Rev. Theodore Sherlock on his morning walk. That well-intentioned young divine was seen no more in Treby Magna. But the river was not dragged, for by the evening coach the Rector received an explanatory letter. The Rev. Theodore's agitation had increased so much during his walk that the passing coach had been a means of deliverance not to be resisted; and, literally at the eleventh hour, he had hailed and mounted the cheerful Tally-ho! and carried away his portion of the debate in his pocket.

But the Rector had subsequently the satisfaction of receiving Mr. Sherlock's painstaking production in print, with a dedication to the Rev. Augustus Debarry, a motto from Saint Chrysostom, and other additions, the fruit of ripening leisure. He was "sorry for poor Sherlock, who wanted confidence;" but he was convinced that for his own part he had taken the course which under the circumstances was the least compromising to the Church. Sir Maximus, however, observed to his son and brother that he had been right and they had been wrong as to the danger of vague, enormous expressions of gratitude to a Dissenting preacher, and on any differences of opinion seldom failed to remind them of that precedent

CHAPTER XXV

Your fellow-man? Divide the epithet:
Say rather, you're the fellow, he the man.

WHEN Christian quitted the Free School with the discovery that the young lady whose appearance had first startled him with an indefinable impression in the market-place was the daughter of the old Dissenting preacher who had shown so much agitated curiosity about his name, he felt very much like an uninitiated chess-player who sees that the pieces are in a peculiar position on the board, and might open the way for him to give checkmate, if he only knew how. Ever since his interview with Jermyn, his mind had been occupied with the charade it offered to his ingenuity. What was the real meaning of the lawyer's interest in him, and in his relations with Maurice Christian Bycliffe? Here was a secret; and secrets were often a source of profit, of that agreeable kind which involved little labour. Jermyn had hinted at profit which might possibly come through him; but Christian said inwardly, with well-satisfied self-esteem, that he was not so pitiable a nincompoop as to trust Jermyn. On the contrary, the only problem before him was to find out by what combination of independent knowledge he could outwit Jermyn, elude any purchase the attorney had on him through his past history, and get a handsome bonus, by which a somewhat shattered man of pleasure might live

well without a master. Christian, having early exhausted the more impulsive delights of life, had become a sober calculator: and he had made up his mind that, for a man who had long ago run through his own money, servitude in a great family was the best kind of retirement after that of a pensioner; but if a better chance offered, a person of talent must not let it slip through his fingers. He held various ends of threads, but there was danger in pulling at them too impatiently. He had not forgotten the surprise which had made him drop the punch-ladle, when Mr. Crowder, talking in the steward's room, had said that a scamp named Henry Scaddon had been concerned in a lawsuit about the Transome estate. Again, Jermyn was the family lawyer of the Transomes; he knew about the exchange of names between Scaddon and Bycliffe; he clearly wanted to know as much as he could about Bycliffe's history. The conclusion was not remote that Bycliffe had had some claim on the Transome property, and that a difficulty had arisen from his being confounded with Henry Scaddon. But hitherto the other incident which had been apparently connected with the interchange of names — Mr. Lyon's demand that he should write down the name Maurice Christian, accompanied with the question whether that were his whole name — had had no visible link with the inferences arrived at through Crowder and Jermyn.

The discovery made this morning at the Free School that Esther was the daughter of the Dissenting preacher at last suggested a possible link. Until then, Christian had not known why

Esther's face had impressed him so peculiarly; but the minister's chief association for him was with Bycliffe, and that association served as a flash to show him that Esther's features and expression, and still more her bearing, now she stood and walked, revived Bycliffe's image. Daughter? There were various ways of being a daughter. Suppose this were a case of adoption; suppose Bycliffe were known to be dead, or thought to be dead. "Begad, if the old parson had fancied the original father was come to life again, it was enough to frighten him a little. Slow and steady," Christian said to himself; "I 'll get some talk with the old man again. He 's safe enough; one can handle him without cutting one's self. I 'll tell him I knew Bycliffe, and was his fellow-prisoner. I 'll worm out the truth about this daughter. Could pretty Annette have married again, and married this little scarecrow? There 's no knowing what a woman will not do."

Christian could see no distinct result for himself from his industry; but if there were to be any such result, it must be reached by following out every clew; and to the non-legal mind there are dim possibilities in law and heirship which prevent any issue from seeming too miraculous.

The consequence of these meditations was that Christian hung about Treby more than usual in his leisure time, and that on the first opportunity he accosted Mr. Lyon in the street with suitable civility, stating that since the occasion which had brought them together some weeks before he had often wished to renew their conversation, and, with Mr. Lyon's permission,

would now ask to do so. After being assured, as he had been by Jermyn, that this courier, who had happened by some accident to possess the memorable locket and pocket-book, was certainly not Annette's husband, and was ignorant whether Maurice Christian Bycliffe were living or dead, the minister's mind had become easy again; his habitual lack of interest in personal details rendering him gradually oblivious of Jermyn's precautionary statement that he was pursuing inquiries, and that if anything of interest turned up, Mr. Lyon should be made acquainted with it. Hence, when Christian addressed him, the minister, taken by surprise and shaken by the recollections of former anxieties, said helplessly, —

"If it is business, sir, you would perhaps do better to address yourself to Mr. Jermyn."

He could not have said anything that was a more valuable hint to Christian. He inferred that the minister had made a confidant of Jermyn, and it was needful to be wary.

"On the contrary, sir," he answered, "it may be of the utmost importance to you that what passes between us should not be known to Mr. Jermyn."

Mr. Lyon was perplexed, and felt at once that he was no more in clear daylight concerning Jermyn than concerning Christian. He dared not neglect the possible duty of hearing what this man had to say, and he invited him to proceed to Malthouse Yard, where they could converse in private.

Once in Mr. Lyon's study, Christian opened the dialogue by saying that since he was in this

room before it had occurred to him that the anxiety he had observed in Mr. Lyon might be owing to some acquaintance with Maurice Christian Bycliffe, — a fellow-prisoner in France, whom he, Christian, had assisted in getting freed from his imprisonment, and who, in fact, had been the owner of the trifles which Mr. Lyon had recently had in his possession and had restored. Christian hastened to say that he knew nothing of Bycliffe's history since they had parted in France, but that he knew of his marriage with Annette Ledru, and had been acquainted with Annette herself. He would be very glad to know what became of Bycliffe, if he could, for he liked him uncommonly.

Here Christian paused; but Mr. Lyon only sat changing colour and trembling. This man's bearing and tone of mind were made repulsive to him by being brought in contact with keenly felt memories, and he could not readily summon the courage to give answers or ask questions.

"May I ask if you knew my friend Bycliffe?" said Christian, trying a more direct method.

"No, sir; I never saw him."

"Ah! well, — you have seen a very striking likeness of him. It 's wonderful, unaccountable; but when I saw Miss Lyon at the Free School the other day, I could have sworn she was Bycliffe's daughter."

"Sir!" said Mr. Lyon, in his deepest tone, half rising, and holding by the arms of his chair, "these subjects touch me with too sharp a point for you to be justified in thrusting them on me out of mere levity. Is there any good you seek or any injury you fear in relation to them?"

"Precisely, sir. We shall come now to an understanding. Suppose I believed that the young lady who goes by the name of Miss Lyon was the daughter of Bycliffe?"

Mr. Lyon moved his lips silently.

"And suppose I had reason to suspect that there would be some great advantage for her if the law knew who was her father?"

"Sir!" said Mr. Lyon, shaken out of all reticence, "I would not conceal it. She believes herself to be my daughter. But I will bear all things rather than deprive her of a right. Nevertheless I appeal to the pity of any fellow-man, not to thrust himself between her and me, but to let me disclose the truth to her myself."

"All in good time," said Christian. "We must do nothing rash. Then Miss Lyon is Annette's child?"

The minister shivered as if the edge of a knife had been drawn across his hand. But the tone of this question, by the very fact that it intensified his antipathy to Christian, enabled him to collect himself for what must be simply the endurance of a painful operation. After a moment or two he said more coolly: "It is true, sir. Her mother became my wife. Proceed with any statement which may concern my duty."

"I have no more to say than this: If there 's a prize that the law might hand over to Bycliffe's daughter, I am much mistaken if there is n't a lawyer who 'll take precious good care to keep the law hoodwinked. And that lawyer is Mat Jermyn. Why, my good sir, if you 've been taking Jermyn into your confidence, you 've been setting the fox to keep off the weasel. It

strikes me that when you were made a little anxious about those articles of poor Bycliffe's, you put Jermyn on making inquiries of me. Eh? I think I am right?"

"I do not deny it."

"Ah!—it was very well you did, for by that means I've found out that he's got hold of some secrets about Bycliffe which he means to stifle. Now, sir, if you desire any justice for your daughter,—step-daughter, I should say,—don't so much as wink to yourself before Jermyn; and if you've got any papers or things of that sort that may come in evidence, as these confounded rascals the lawyers call it, clutch them tight, for if they get into Jermyn's hands they may soon fly up the chimney. Have I said enough?"

"I had not purposed any further communication with Mr. Jermyn, sir; indeed, I have nothing further to communicate. Except that one fact concerning my daughter's birth, which I have erred in concealing from her, I neither seek disclosures nor do I tremble before them."

"Then I have your word that you will be silent about this conversation between us? It is for your daughter's interest, mind."

"Sir, I shall be silent," said Mr. Lyon, with cold gravity. "Unless," he added, with an acumen as to possibilities rather disturbing to Christian's confident contempt for the old man,—"unless I were called upon by some tribunal to declare the whole truth in this relation; in which case I should submit myself to that authority of investigation which is a requisite of social order."

Christian departed, feeling satisfied that he had got the utmost to be obtained at present out of the Dissenting preacher, whom he had not dared to question more closely. He must look out for chance lights, and perhaps, too, he might catch a stray hint by stirring the sediment of Mr. Crowder's memory. But he must not venture on inquiries that might be noticed. He was in awe of Jermyn.

When Mr. Lyon was alone he paced up and down among his books, and thought aloud, in order to relieve himself after the constraint of this interview. "I will not wait for the urgency of necessity," he said more than once. "I will tell the child without compulsion; and then I shall fear nothing. And an unwonted spirit of tenderness has filled her of late. She will forgive me."

CHAPTER XXVI

> Consideration like an angel came
> And whipped the offending Adam out of her;
> Leaving her body as a paradise
> To envelop and contain celestial spirits.
>
> SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V.*

THE next morning, after much prayer for the needful strength and wisdom, Mr. Lyon came downstairs with the resolution that another day should not pass without the fulfilment of the task he had laid on himself; but what hour he should choose for his solemn disclosure to Esther must depend on their mutual occupations. Perhaps he must defer it till they sat up alone together, after Lyddy was gone to bed. But at breakfast Esther said, —

"To-day is a holiday, father. My pupils are all going to Duffield to see the wild beasts. What have you got to do to-day? Come, you are eating no breakfast. Oh, Lyddy, Lyddy, the eggs are hard again. I wish you would not read Alleyne's 'Alarm' before breakfast; it makes you cry and forget the eggs."

"They *are* hard, and that 's the truth; but there 's hearts as are harder, Miss Esther," said Lyddy.

"I think not," said Esther. "This is leathery enough for the heart of the most obdurate Jew. Pray give it little Zachary for a football."

"Dear, dear, don't you be so light, miss. We may all be dead before night."

"You speak out of season, my good Lyddy,"

said Mr. Lyon, wearily; "depart into the kitchen."

"What have you got to do to-day, father?" persisted Esther. "I have a holiday."

Mr. Lyon felt as if this were a fresh summons not to delay. "I have something of great moment to do, my dear; and since you are not otherwise demanded, I will ask you to come and sit with me upstairs."

Esther wondered what there could be on her father's mind more pressing than his morning studies.

She soon knew. Motionless, but mentally stirred as she had never been before, Esther listened to her mother's story, and to the outpouring of her step-father's long-pent-up experience. The rays of the morning sun which fell athwart the books, the sense of the beginning day, had deepened the solemnity more than night would have done. All knowledge which alters our lives penetrates us more when it comes in the early morning; the day that has to be travelled with something new and perhaps forever sad in its light is an image of the life that spreads beyond. But at night the time of rest is near.

Mr. Lyon regarded his narrative as a confession, — as a revelation to this beloved child of his own miserable weakness and error. But to her it seemed a revelation of another sort; her mind seemed suddenly enlarged by a vision of passion and struggle, of delight and renunciation, in the lot of beings who had hitherto been a dull enigma to her. And in the act of unfolding to her that he was not her real father, but

had only striven to cherish her as a father, had only longed to be loved as a father, the odd, wayworn, unworldly man became the object of a new sympathy in which Esther felt herself exalted. Perhaps this knowledge would have been less powerful within her but for the mental preparation that had come during the last two months from her acquaintance with Felix Holt, which had taught her to doubt the infallibility of her own standard, and raised a presentiment of moral depths that were hidden from her.

Esther had taken her place opposite to her father, and had not moved even her clasped hands while he was speaking. But after the long outpouring in which he seemed to lose the sense of everything but the memories he was giving utterance to, he paused a little while and then said timidly, —

"This is a late retrieval of a long error, Esther. I make not excuses for myself, for we ought to strive that our affections be rooted in the truth. Nevertheless you — "

Esther had risen, and had glided on to the wooden stool on a level with her father's chair, where he was accustomed to lay books. She wanted to speak, but the floodgates could not be opened for words alone. She threw her arms round the old man's neck, and sobbed out with a passionate cry, "Father, father! forgive me if I have not loved you enough. I will, — I will!"

The old man's little delicate frame was shaken by a surprise and joy that were almost painful in their intensity. He had been going to ask forgiveness of her who asked it for herself. In that moment of supreme complex emotion one

ray of the minister's joy was the thought, "Surely the work of grace is begun in her, — surely here is a heart that the Lord hath touched."

They sat so, enclasped in silence, while Esther relieved her full heart. When she raised her head, she sat quite still for a minute or two looking fixedly before her, and keeping one little hand in the minister's. Presently she looked at him and said, —

"Then you lived like a working-man, father; you were very, very poor. Yet my mother had been used to luxury. She was well born, — she was a lady."

"It is true, my dear; it was a poor life that I could give her."

Mr. Lyon answered in utter dimness as to the course Esther's mind was taking. He had anticipated before his disclosure, from his long-standing discernment of tendencies in her which were often the cause of silent grief to him, that the discovery likely to have the keenest interest for her would be that her parents had a higher rank than that of the poor Dissenting preacher; but she had shown that other and better sensibilities were predominant. He rebuked himself now for a hasty and shallow judgment concerning the child's inner life, and waited for new clearness.

"But that must be the best life, father," said Esther, suddenly rising, with a flush across her paleness, and standing with her head thrown a little backward, as if some illumination had given her a new decision. "That must be the best life."

"What life, my dear child?"

"Why, that where one bears and does everything because of some great and strong feeling, — so that this and that in one's circumstances don't signify."

"Yea, verily; but the feeling that should be thus supreme is devotedness to the Divine Will."

Esther did not speak; her father's words did not fit on to the impressions wrought in her by what he had told her. She sat down again, and said more quietly, —

"Mamma did not speak much of my — first father?"

"Not much, dear. She said he was beautiful to the eye, and good and generous; and that his family was of those who have been long privileged among their fellows. But now I will deliver to you the letters, which, together with a ring and locket, are the only visible memorials she retained of him."

Mr. Lyon reached and delivered to Esther the box containing the relics. "Take them, and examine them in privacy, my dear. And that I may no more err by concealment, I will tell you some late occurrences that bear on these memorials, though to my present apprehension doubtfully and confusedly."

He then narrated to Esther all that had passed between himself and Christian. The possibility — to which Mr. Lyon's alarms had pointed — that her real father might still be living was a new shock. She could not speak about it to her present father, but it was registered in silence as a painful addition to the uncertain-

ties which she suddenly saw hanging over her life.

"I have little confidence in this man's allegations," Mr. Lyon ended. "I confess his presence and speech are to me as the jarring of metal. He bears the stamp of one who has never conceived aught of more sanctity than the lust of the eye and the pride of life. He hints at some possible inheritance for you, and denounces mysteriously the devices of Mr. Jermyn. All this may or may not have a true foundation. But it is not my part to move in this matter save on a clearer showing."

"Certainly not, father," said Esther, eagerly. A little while ago, these problematic prospects might have set her dreaming pleasantly; but now, for some reasons that she could not have put distinctly into words, they affected her with dread.

CHAPTER XXVII

To hear with eyes is part of love's rare wit.
SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnets.*

Custom calls me to 't:
What custom wills, in all things should we do 't,
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heaped
For truth to over-peer.
Coriolanus.

IN the afternoon Mr. Lyon went out to see the sick amongst his flock; and Esther, who had been passing the morning in dwelling on the memories and the few remaining relics of her parents, was left alone in the parlour amidst the lingering odours of the early dinner, not easily got rid of in that small house. Rich people, who know nothing of these vulgar details, can hardly imagine their significance in the history of multitudes of human lives in which the sensibilities are never adjusted to the external conditions. Esther always felt so much discomfort from those odours that she usually seized any possibility of escaping from them, and to-day they oppressed her the more because she was weary with long-continued agitation. Why did she not put on her bonnet as usual and get out into the open air? It was one of those pleasant November afternoons — pleasant in the wide country — when the sunshine is on the clinging brown leaves of the young oaks, and the last yellow leaves of the elms flutter down in the fresh but not eager breeze. But

Esther sat still on the sofa, — pale and with reddened eyelids, her curls all pushed back carelessly, and her elbow resting on the ridgy black horsehair, which usually almost set her teeth on edge if she pressed it even through her sleeve, — while her eyes rested blankly on the dull street. Lyddy had said, "Miss, you look sadly; if you can't take a walk, go and lie down." She had never seen the curls in such disorder, and she reflected that there had been a death from typhus recently. But the obstinate miss only shook her head.

Esther was waiting for the sake of — not a probability, but — a mere possibility, which made the brothy odours endurable. Apparently, in less than half an hour, the possibility came to pass, for she changed her attitude, almost started from her seat, sat down again, and listened eagerly. If Lyddy should send him away, could she herself rush out and call him back? Why not? Such things were permissible where it was understood, from the necessity of the case, that there was only friendship. But Lyddy opened the door and said, "Here's Mr. Holt, miss, wants to know if you'll give him leave to come in. I told him you was sadly."

"Oh, yes, Lyddy, beg him to come in."

"I should not have persevered," said Felix, as they shook hands, "only I know Lyddy's dismal way. But you do look ill," he went on as he seated himself at the other end of the sofa; "or rather, — for that's a false way of putting it, — you look as if you had been very much distressed. Do you mind about my taking notice of it?"

He spoke very kindly, and looked at her more persistently than he had ever done before, when her hair was perfect.

"You are quite right. I am not at all ill. But I have been very much agitated this morning. My father has been telling me things I never heard before about my mother, and giving me things that belonged to her. She died when I was a very little creature."

"Then it is no new pain or trouble for you and Mr. Lyon? I could not help being anxious to know that."

Esther passed her hand over her brow before she answered: "I hardly know whether it is pain, or something better than pleasure. It has made me see things I was blind to before, — depths in my father's nature."

As she said this, she looked at Felix, and their eyes met very gravely.

"It is such a beautiful day," he said, "it would do you good to go into the air. Let me take you along the river towards Little Treby, will you?"

"I will put my bonnet on," said Esther, unhesitatingly, though they had never walked out together before.

It is true that to get into the fields they had to pass through the street; and when Esther saw some acquaintances, she reflected that her walking alone with Felix might be a subject of remark, — all the more because of his cap, patched boots, no cravat, and thick stick. Esther was a little amazed herself at what she had come to. So our lives glide on: the river ends we don't know where, and the

sea begins, and then there is no more jumping ashore.

When they were in the streets, Esther hardly spoke. Felix talked with his usual readiness, as easily as if he were not doing it solely to divert her thoughts, first about Job Tudge's delicate chest, and the probability that the little white-faced monkey would not live long; and then about a miserable beginning of a night-school, which was all he could get together at Sproxton; and the dismalness of that hamlet, which was a sort of lip to the coal-pit on one side and the "public" on the other, — and yet a paradise compared with the wynds of Glasgow, where there was little more than a chink of daylight to show the hatred in women's faces.

But soon they got into the fields, where there was a right of way towards Little Treby, now following the course of the river, now crossing towards a lane, and now turning into a cart-track through a plantation.

"Here we are!" said Felix, when they had crossed the wooden bridge, and were treading on the slanting shadows made by the elm-trunks. "I think this is delicious. I never feel less unhappy than in these late autumn afternoons when they are sunny."

"Less unhappy! There now!" said Esther, smiling at him with some of her habitual sauciness, "I have caught you in self-contradiction. I have heard you quite furious against puling, melancholy people. If I had said what you have just said, you would have given me a long lecture, and told me to go home and interest myself in the reason of the rule of three."

"Very likely," said Felix, beating the weeds, according to the foible of our common humanity when it has a stick in its hand. "But I don't think myself a fine fellow because I 'm melancholy. I don't measure my force by the negations in me, and think my soul must be a mighty one because it is more given to idle suffering than to beneficent activity. That 's what your favourite gentlemen do, of the Byronic-bilious style."

"I don't admit that those are my favourite gentlemen."

"I 've heard you defend them, — gentlemen like your Rénés, who have no particular talent for the finite, but a general sense that the infinite is the right thing for them. They might as well boast of nausea as a proof of a strong inside."

"Stop, stop ! You run on in that way to get out of my reach. I convicted you of confessing that you are melancholy."

"Yes," said Felix, thrusting his left hand into his pocket with a shrug; "as I could confess to a great many other things I 'm not proud of. The fact is, there are not many easy lots to be drawn in the world at present; and such as they are I am not envious of them. I don't say life is not worth having: it is worth having to a man who has some sparks of sense and feeling and bravery in him. And the finest fellow of all would be the one who could be glad to have lived because the world was chiefly miserable, and his life had come to help some one who needed it. He would be the man who had the most powers and the fewest selfish wants. But

I 'm not up to the level of what I see to be best. I 'm often a hungry, discontented fellow."

"Why have you made your life so hard then?" said Esther, rather frightened as she asked the question. "It seems to me you have tried to find just the most difficult task."

"Not at all," said Felix, with curt decision. "My course was a very simple one. It was pointed out to me by conditions that I saw as clearly as I see the bars of this stile. It 's a difficult stile too," added Felix, striding over. "Shall I help you, or will you be left to yourself?"

"I can do without help, thank you."

"It was all simple enough," continued Felix, as they walked on. "If I meant to put a stop to the sale of those drugs, I must keep my mother, and of course at her age she would not leave the place she had been used to. And I had made up my mind against what they call genteel businesses."

"But suppose every one did as you do? Please to forgive me for saying so; but I cannot see why you could not have lived as honourably with some employment that presupposes education and refinement."

"Because you can't see my history or my nature," said Felix, bluntly. "I have to determine for myself, and not for other men. I don't blame them, or think I am better than they; their circumstances are different. I would never choose to withdraw myself from the labour and common burthen of the world; but I do choose to withdraw myself from the push and the scramble for money and position.

Any man is at liberty to call me a fool, and say that mankind are benefited by the push and the scramble in the long-run. But I care for the people who live now and will not be living when the long-run comes. As it is, I prefer going shares with the unlucky."

Esther did not speak, and there was silence between them for a minute or two, till they passed through a gate into a plantation where there was no large timber, but only thin-stemmed trees and underwood, so that the sunlight fell on the mossy spaces which lay open here and there.

"See how beautiful those stooping birch-stems are with the light on them!" said Felix. "Here is an old felled trunk they have not thought worth carrying away. Shall we sit down a little while?"

"Yes; the mossy ground with the dry leaves sprinkled over it is delightful to one's feet." Esther sat down and took off her bonnet, that the light breeze might fall on her head. Felix, too, threw down his cap and stick, lying on the ground with his back against the felled trunk.

"I wish I felt more as you do," she said, looking at the point of her foot, which was playing with a tuft of moss. "I can't help caring very much what happens to me. And you seem to care so little about yourself."

"You are thoroughly mistaken," said Felix. "It is just because I'm a very ambitious fellow, with very hungry passions, wanting a great deal to satisfy me, that I have chosen to give up what people call worldly good. At least that has been one determining reason. It all de-

pends on what a man gets into his consciousness, — what life thrusts into his mind, so that it becomes present to him as remorse is present to the guilty, or a mechanical problem to an inventive genius. There are two things I 've got present in that way : one of them is the picture of what I should hate to be. I 'm determined never to go about making my face simpering or solemn, and telling professional lies for profit ; or to get tangled in affairs where I must wink at dishonesty and pocket the proceeds, and justify that knavery as part of a system that I can't alter. If I once went into that sort of struggle for success, I should want to win, — I should defend the wrong that I had once identified myself with. I should become everything that I see now beforehand to be detestable. And what 's more, I should do this, as men are doing it every day, for a ridiculously small prize, — perhaps for none at all, — perhaps for the sake of two parlours, a rank eligible for the churchwardenship, a discontented wife, and several unhopeful children."

Esther felt a terrible pressure on her heart, — the certainty of her remoteness from Felix, — the sense that she was utterly trivial to him.

" The other thing that 's got into my mind like a splinter," said Felix, after a pause, " is the life of the miserable, — the spawning life of vice and hunger. I 'll never be one of the sleek dogs. The old Catholics are right, with their higher rule and their lower. Some are called to subject themselves to a harder discipline, and renounce things voluntarily which are lawful for

others. It is the old word, — 'necessity is laid upon me.'"

"It seems to me you are stricter than my father is."

"No. I quarrel with no delight that is not base or cruel, but one must sometimes accommodate one's self to a small share. That is the lot of the majority. I would wish the minority joy, only they don't want my wishes."

Again there was silence. Esther's cheeks were hot in spite of the breeze that sent her hair floating backward. She felt an inward strain, a demand on her to see things in a light that was not easy or soothing. When Felix had asked her to walk, he had seemed so kind, so alive to what might be her feelings, that she had thought herself nearer to him than she had ever been before; but since they had come out, he had appeared to forget all that. And yet she was conscious that this impatience of hers was very petty. Battling in this way with her own little impulses, and looking at the birch-stems opposite till her gaze was too wide for her to see anything distinctly, she was unaware how long they had remained without speaking. She did not know that Felix had changed his attitude a little, and was resting his elbow on the tree-trunk, while he supported his head, which was turned towards her. Suddenly he said, in a lower tone than was habitual to him, —

"You are very beautiful."

She started and looked round at him, to see whether his face would give some help to the interpretation of this novel speech. He was

looking up at her quite calmly, very much as a reverential Protestant might look at a picture of the Virgin, with a devoutness suggested by the type rather than by the image. Esther's vanity was not in the least gratified; she felt that, somehow or other, Felix was going to reproach her.

"I wonder," he went on, still looking at her, "whether the subtle measuring of forces will ever come to measuring the force there would be in one beautiful women whose mind was as noble as her face was beautiful, — who made a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life."

Esther's eyes got hot and smarting. It was no use trying to be dignified. She had turned away her head, and now said rather bitterly, "It is difficult for a woman ever to try to be anything good when she is not believed in, — when it is always supposed that she must be contemptible."

"No, dear Esther," — it was the first time Felix had been prompted to call her by her Christian name; and as he did so he laid his large hand on her two little hands, which were clasped on her knees. "You don't believe that I think you contemptible. When I first saw you —"

"I know, I know," said Esther, interrupting him impetuously, but still looking away. "You mean you did think me contemptible then. But it was very narrow of you to judge me in that way, when my life had been so different from yours. I have great faults. I know I am selfish, and think too much of my own

He was looking up at her quite calmly, very much as a reverential Protestant might look at a picture of the Virgin

small tastes and too little of what affects others. But I am not stupid. I am not unfeeling. I can see what is better."

"But I have not done you injustice since I knew more of you," said Felix, gently.

"Yes, you have," said Esther, turning and smiling at him through her tears. "You talk to me like an angry pedagogue. Were *you* always wise? Remember the time when you were foolish or naughty."

"That is not far off," said Felix, curtly, taking away his hand, and clasping it with the other at the back of his head. The talk, which seemed to be introducing a mutual understanding, such as had not existed before, seemed to have undergone some check.

"Shall we get up and walk back now?" said Esther, after a few moments.

"No," said Felix, entreatingly. "Don't move yet. I dare say we shall never walk together or sit here again."

"Why not?"

"Because I am a man who am warned by visions. Those old stories of visions and dreams guiding men have their truth; we are saved by making the future present to ourselves."

"I wish I could get visions, then," said Esther, smiling at him, with an effort of playfulness, in resistance to something vaguely mournful within her.

"That is what I want," said Felix, looking at her very earnestly. "Don't turn your head. Do look at me, and then I shall know if I may go on speaking. I do believe in you; but I want you to have such a vision of the future

that you may never lose your best self. Some charm or other may be flung about you, — some of your attar-of-rose fascinations, — and nothing but a good, strong, terrible vision will save you. And if it did save you, you might be that woman I was thinking of a little while ago when I looked at your face, — the woman whose beauty makes a great task easier to men instead of turning them away from it. I am not likely to see such fine issues; but they may come where a woman's spirit is finely touched. I should like to be sure they would come to you."

"Why are you not likely to know what becomes of me?" said Esther, turning away her eyes in spite of his command. "Why should you not always be my father's friend and mine?"

"Oh, I shall go away as soon as I can to some large town," said Felix, in his more usual tone, — "some ugly, wicked, miserable place. I want to be a demagogue of a new sort; an honest one, if possible, who will tell the people they are blind and foolish, and neither flatter them nor fatten on them. I have my heritage, — an order I belong to. I have the blood of a line of handicraftsmen in my veins, and I want to stand up for the lot of the handicraftsmen as a good lot, in which a man may be better trained to all the best functions of his nature than if he belonged to the grimacing set who have visiting-cards, and are proud to be thought richer than their neighbours."

"Would nothing ever make it seem right to you to change your mind?" said Esther (she had rapidly woven some possibilities out of the

new uncertainties in her own lot, though she would not for the world have had Felix know of her weaving). "Suppose, by some means or other, a fortune might come to you honourably, — by marriage, or in any other unexpected way, — would you see no change in your course?"

"No," said Felix, peremptorily, "I will never be rich. I don't count that as any peculiar virtue. Some men do well to accept riches, but that is not my inward vocation: I have no fellow-feeling with the rich as a class; the habits of their lives are odious to me. Thousands of men have wedded poverty because they expect to go to heaven for it; I don't expect to go to heaven for it, but I wed it because it enables me to do what I most want to do on earth. Whatever the hopes for the world may be, — whether great or small, — I am a man of this generation; I will try to make life less bitter for a few within my reach. It is held reasonable enough to toil for the fortunes of a family, though it may turn to imbecility in the third generation. I choose a family with more chances in it."

Esther looked before her dreamily till she said, "That seems a hard lot; yet it is a great one." She rose to walk back.

"Then you don't think I 'm a fool," said Felix, loudly, starting to his feet, and then stooping to gather up his cap and stick.

"Of course you suspected me of that stupidity."

"Well, women, unless they are Saint Theresas or Elizabeth Frys, generally think this

sort of thing madness, unless when they read of it in the Bible."

"A woman can hardly ever choose in that way; she is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach."

"Why, can you imagine yourself choosing hardship as the better lot?" said Felix, looking at her with a sudden question in his eyes.

"Yes, I can," she said, flushing over neck and brow.

Their words were charged with a meaning dependent entirely on the secret consciousness of each. Nothing had been said which was necessarily personal. They walked a few yards along the road by which they had come, without further speech, till Felix said gently, "Take my arm." She took it, and they walked home so, entirely without conversation. Felix was struggling as a firm man struggles with a temptation, seeing beyond it and disbelieving its lying promise. Esther was struggling as a woman struggles with the yearning for some expression of love, and with vexation under that subjection to a yearning which is not likely to be satisfied. Each was conscious of a silence which each was unable to break, till they entered Malthouse Lane and were within a few yards of the minister's door.

"It is getting dusk," Felix then said; "will Mr. Lyon be anxious about you?"

"No, I think not. Lyddy would tell him that I went out with you, and that you carried a large stick," said Esther, with her light laugh.

Felix went in with Esther to take tea; but the conversation was entirely between him and Mr. Lyon about the tricks of canvassing, the foolish personality of the placards, and the probabilities of Transome's return, as to which Felix declared himself to have become indifferent. This scepticism made the minister uneasy; he had great belief in the old political watchwords, had preached that universal suffrage and no ballot were agreeable to the will of God, and liked to believe that a visible "instrument" was forthcoming in the Radical Candidate who had pronounced emphatically against Whig finality. Felix, being in a perverse mood, contended that universal suffrage would be equally agreeable to the devil; that he would change his politics a little, have a larger traffic, and see himself more fully represented in Parliament.

"Nay, my friend," said the minister, "you are again sporting with paradox; for you will not deny that you glory in the name of Radical, or Root-and-branch man, as they said in the great times when Nonconformity was in its giant youth."

"A Radical, — yes; but I want to go to some roots a good deal lower down than the franchise."

"Truly there is a work within which cannot be dispensed with; but it is our preliminary work to free men from the stifled life of political nullity, and bring them into what Milton calls 'the liberal air,' wherein alone can be wrought the final triumphs of the Spirit."

"With all my heart. But while Caliban is Caliban, though you multiply him by a million,

he 'll worship every Trinculo that carries a bottle. I forget, though, — you don't read Shakespeare, Mr. Lyon."

"I am bound to confess that I have so far looked into a volume of Esther's as to conceive your meaning; but the fantasies therein were so little to be reconciled with a steady contemplation of that divine economy which is hidden from sense and revealed to faith, that I forbore the reading, as likely to perturb my ministrations."

Esther sat by in unusual silence. The conviction that Felix willed her exclusion from his life was making it plain that something more than friendship between them was not so thoroughly out of the question as she had always inwardly asserted. In her pain that his choice lay aloof from her, she was compelled frankly to admit to herself the longing that it had been otherwise, and that he had entreated her to share his difficult life. He was like no one else to her; he had seemed to bring at once a law, and the love that gave strength to obey the law. Yet the next moment, stung by his independence of her, she denied that she loved him; she had only longed for a moral support under the negations of her life. If she were not to have that support, all effort seemed useless.

Esther had been so long used to hear the formulas of her father's belief without feeling or understanding them, that they had lost all power to touch her. The first religious experience of her life — the first self-questioning, the first voluntary subjection, the first longing to acquire the strength of greater motives

and obey the more strenuous rule — had come to her through Felix Holt. No wonder that she felt as if the loss of him were inevitable backsliding!

But was it certain that she should lose him? She did not believe that he was really indifferent to her.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Titus. But what says Jupiter, I ask thee?
Clown. Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter;
I never drank with him in all my life.
Titus Andronicus.

THE multiplication of uncomplimentary placards noticed by Mr. Lyon and Felix Holt was one of several signs that the days of nomination and election were approaching. The presence of the Revising Barrister in Treby was not only an opportunity for all persons not otherwise busy to show their zeal for the purification of the voting-lists, but also to reconcile private ease and public duty by standing about the streets and lounging at doors.

It was no light business for Trebians to form an opinion; the mere fact of a public functionary with an unfamiliar title was enough to give them pause, as a premiss that was not to be quickly started from. To Mr. Pink, the saddler, for example, until some distinct injury or benefit had accrued to him, the existence of the Revising Barrister was like the existence of the young giraffe which Wombwell had lately brought into those parts, — it was to be contemplated and not criticised. Mr. Pink professed a deep-dyed Toryism; but he regarded all fault-finding as Radical and somewhat impious, as disturbing to trade, and likely to offend the gentry or the servants through whom their harness was ordered; there was a Nemesis in

things which made objection unsafe, and even the Reform Bill was a sort of electric eel which a thriving tradesman had better leave alone. It was only the "Papists" who lived far enough off to be spoken of uncivilly.

But Mr. Pink was fond of news, which he collected and retailed with perfect impartiality, noting facts and rejecting comments. Hence he was well pleased to have his shop so constant a place of resort for loungers, that to many Trebians there was a strong association between the pleasures of gossip and the smell of leather. He had the satisfaction of chalking and cutting, and of keeping his journeymen close at work, at the very time that he learned from his visitors who were those whose votes had been called in question before his Honour, how Lawyer Jermyn had been too much for Lawyer Labron about Todd's cottages, and how, in the opinion of some townsmen, this looking into the value of people's property, and swearing it down below a certain sum, was a nasty, inquisitorial kind of thing; while others observed that being nice to a few pounds was all nonsense, — they should put the figure high enough, and then never mind if a voter's qualification was thereabouts. But, said Mr. Sims the auctioneer, everything was done for the sake of the lawyers. Mr. Pink suggested impartially that lawyers must live; but Mr. Sims, having a ready auctioneering wit, did not see that so many of them need live, or that babies were born lawyers. Mr. Pink felt that this speculation was complicated by the ordering of side-saddles for lawyers' daughters, and, returning to

the firm ground of fact, stated that it was getting dusk.

The dusk seemed deepened the next moment by a tall figure obstructing the doorway, at sight of whom Mr. Pink rubbed his hands and smiled and bowed more than once, with evident solicitude to show honour where honour was due, while he said, —

"Mr. Christian, sir, how do you do, sir?"

Christian answered with the condescending familiarity of a superior: "Very badly, I can tell you, with these confounded braces that you were to make such a fine job of. See, old fellow, they 've burst out again."

"Very sorry, sir. Can you leave them with me?"

"Oh, yes, I 'll leave them. What 's the news, eh?" said Christian, half seating himself on a high stool, and beating his boot with a hand-whip.

"Well, sir, we look to you to tell us that," said Mr. Pink, with a knowing smile. "You 're at headquarters, — eh, sir? That was what I said to Mr. Scales the other day. He came for some straps, Mr. Scales did, and he asked that question in pretty near the same terms that you 've done, sir, and I answered him, as I may say, ditto. Not meaning any disrespect to you, sir, but a way of speaking."

"Come, that 's gammon, Pink," said Christian. "You know everything. You can tell me, if you will, who is the fellow employed to paste up Transome's handbills?"

"What do *you* say, Mr. Sims?" said Pink, looking at the auctioneer.

"Why, you know and I know well enough. It 's Tommy Trounsem, — an old, crippling, half-mad fellow. Most people know Tommy. I 've employed him myself for charity."

"Where shall I find him?" said Christian.

"At the Cross-Keys, in Pollard's End, most likely," said Mr. Sims. "I don't know where he puts himself when he is n't at the public."

"He was a stoutish fellow fifteen years ago, when he carried pots," said Mr. Pink.

"Ay, and has snared many a hare in his time," said Mr. Sims. "But he was always a little cracked. Lord bless you! he used to swear he had a right to the Transome estate."

"Why, what put that notion into his head?" said Christian, who had learned more than he expected.

"The lawing, sir, — nothing but the lawing about the estate. There was a deal of it twenty year ago," said Mr. Pink. "Tommy happened to turn up hereabout at that time, — a big, lungeous fellow, who would speak disrespectfully of hanybody."

"Oh, he meant no harm," said Mr. Sims. "He was fond of a drop to drink, and not quite right in the upper story, and he could hear no difference between Trounsem and Transome. It 's an odd way of speaking they have in that part where he was born, — a little north'ard. You 'll hear it in his tongue now, if you talk to him."

"At the Cross-Keys I shall find him, eh?" said Christian, getting off his stool. "Good-day, Pink, — good-day."

Christian went straight from the saddler's to

Quorlen's, the Tory printer's, with whom he had contrived a political spree. Quorlen was a new man in Treby, who had so reduced the trade of Dow, the old hereditary printer, that Dow had lapsed to Whiggery and Radicalism and opinions in general, so far as they were contented to express themselves in a small stock of types. Quorlen had brought his Duffield wit with him, and insisted that religion and joking were the handmaids of politics; on which principle he and Christian undertook the joking, and left the religion to the Rector. The joke at present in question was a practical one. Christian, turning into the shop, merely said, "I 've found him out, — give me the placards;" and tucking a thickish flat bundle, wrapped in a black glazed cotton bag, under his arm, walked out into the dusk again.

"Suppose now," he said to himself, as he strode along, — "suppose there should be some secret to be got out of this old scamp, or some notion that 's as good as a secret to those who know how to use it? That would be virtue rewarded. But I 'm afraid the old tosspot is not likely to be good for much. There 's truth in wine, and there may be some in gin and muddy beer; but whether it 's truth worth my knowing, is another question. I 've got plenty of truth in my time out of men who were half-seas-over, but never any that was worth a sixpence to me."

The Cross-Keys was a very old-fashioned "public:" its bar was a big rambling kitchen, with an undulating brick floor; the small-paned windows threw an interesting obscurity over

the far-off dresser, garnished with pewter and tin, and with large dishes that seemed to speak of better times; the two settles were half pushed under the wide-mouthed chimney; and the grate with its brick hobs, massive iron crane, and various pothooks, suggested a generous plenty possibly existent in all moods and tenses except the indicative present. One way of getting an idea of our fellow-countrymen's miseries is to go and look at their pleasures. The Cross-Keys had a fungous-featured landlord and a yellow sickly landlady, with a large white kerchief bound round her cap, as if her head had recently required surgery; it had doctored ale, an odour of bad tobacco, and remarkably strong cheese. It was not what Astræa, when come back, might be expected to approve as the scene of ecstatic enjoyment for the beings whose special prerogative it is to lift their sublime faces towards heaven. Still, there was ample space on the hearth, — accommodation for narrative bagmen or boxmen, — room for a man to stretch his legs; his brain was not pressed upon by a white wall within a yard of him, and the light did not stare in mercilessly on bare ugliness, turning the fire to ashes. Compared with some beer-houses of this more advanced period, the Cross-Keys of that day presented a high standard of pleasure.

But though this venerable "public" had not failed to share in the recent political excitement of drinking, the pleasures it offered were not at this early hour of the evening sought by a numerous company. There were only three or four pipes being smoked by the firelight, but it was

enough for Christian when he found that one of these was being smoked by the bill-sticker, whose large flat basket, stuffed with placards, leaned near him against the settle. So splendid an apparition as Christian was not a little startling at the Cross-Keys, and was gazed at in expectant silence; but he was a stranger in Pollard's End, and was taken for the highest style of traveller when he declared that he was deucedly thirsty, ordered sixpenny-worth of gin and a large jug of water, and, putting a few drops of the spirit into his own glass, invited Tommy Trounsem, who sat next him, to help himself. Tommy was not slower than a shaking hand obliged him to be in accepting this invitation. He was a tall, broad-shouldered old fellow, who had once been good-looking; but his cheeks and chest were both hollow now, and his limbs were shrunken.

"You 've got some bills there, master, eh?" said Christian, pointing to the basket. "Is there an auction coming on?"

"Auction? no," said Tommy, with a gruff hoarseness, which was the remnant of a jovial bass, and with an accent which differed from the Trebian fitfully, as an early habit is wont to reassert itself. "I 've nought to do wi' auctions; I 'm a pol'tical charicter. It 's me am getting Trounsem into Parl'ment."

"Trounsem, says he," the landlord observed, taking out his pipe with a low laugh. "It 's Transome, sir. Maybe you don't belong to this part. It 's the candidate 'ull do most for the working-men, and 's proved it too, in the way o' being open-handed and wishing 'em to enjoy

themselves. If I 'd twenty votes, I 'd give one for Transome, and I don't care who hears me."

The landlord peeped out from his fungous cluster of features with a beery confidence that the high figure of twenty had somehow raised the hypothetic value of his vote.

"Spilkins, now," said Tommy, waving his hand to the landlord, "you let one genelman speak to another, will you? This genelman wants to know about my bills. Does he, or does n't he?"

"What then? I spoke according," said the landlord, mildly holding his own.

"You 're all very well, Spilkins," returned Tommy, "but y' are n't me. I know what the bills are. It 's public business. I 'm none o' your common bill-stickers, master; I 've left off sticking up ten guineas' reward for a sheep-stealer, or low stuff like that. These are Trounsem's bills; and I 'm the rightful family, and so I give him a lift. A Trounsem I am, and a Trounsem I 'll be buried; and if Old Nick tries to lay hold on me for poaching, I 'll say, 'You be hanged for a lawyer, Old Nick; every hare and pheasant on the Trounsem's land is mine;' and what rises the family, rises old Tommy; and we 're going to get into Parl'-ment, — that 's the long and the short on 't, master. And I 'm the head o' the family, and I stick the bills. There 's Johnsons and Thomsons and Jacksons and Billsons; but I 'm a Trounsem, I am. What do you say to that, master?"

This appeal, accompanied by a blow on the table, while the landlord winked at the company,

was addressed to Christian, who answered with severe gravity, —

"I say there is n't any work more honourable than bill-sticking."

"No, no," said Tommy, wagging his head from side to side. "I thought you 'd come in to that. I thought you 'd know better than say contrairy. But I 'll shake hands wi' you; I don't want to knock any man's head off. I 'm a good chap, — a sound crock,— an old family kep' out o' my rights. I shall go to heaven, for all Old Nick."

As these celestial prospects might imply that a little extra gin was beginning to tell on the bill-sticker, Christian wanted to lose no time in arresting his attention. He laid his hand on Tommy's arm and spoke emphatically, —

"But I 'll tell you what you bill-stickers are not up to. You should be on the look-out when Debarry's side have stuck up fresh bills, and go and paste yours over them. I know where there 's a lot of Debarry's bills now. Come along with me, and I 'll show you. We 'll paste them over, and then we 'll come back and treat the company."

"Hooray!" said Tommy. "Let 's be off then."

He was one of the thoroughly inured, originally hale drunkards, and did not easily lose his head or legs or the ordinary amount of method in his talk. Strangers often supposed that Tommy was tipsy when he had only taken what he called "one blessed pint," chiefly from that glorious contentment with himself and his adverse fortunes which is not usually character-

istic of the sober Briton. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, seized his paste-vessel and his basket, and prepared to start with a satisfactory promise that he could know what he was about.

The landlord and some others had confidently concluded that they understood all about Christian now. He was a Transome's man, come to see after the bill-sticking in Transome's interest. The landlord, telling his yellow wife snappishly to open the door for the gentleman, hoped soon to see him again.

"This is a Transome's house, sir," he observed, "in respect of entertaining customers of that colour. I do my duty as a publican, which, if I know it, is to turn back no genelman's money. I say, give every genelman a chanch, and the more the merrier, in Parl'ment and out of it. And if anybody says they want but two Parl'ment men, I say it 'ud be better for trade if there was six of 'em, and voters according."

"Ay, ay," said Christian; "you 're a sensible man, landlord. You don't mean to vote for Debarry then, eh?"

"Not nohow," said the landlord, thinking that where negatives were good the more you had of them the better.

As soon as the door had closed behind Christian and his new companion, Tommy said, —

"Now, master, if you 're to be my lantern, don't you be a Jacky Lantern, which I take to mean one as leads you the wrong way. For I 'll tell you what, — if you 've had the luck to fall

in wi' Tommy Trounsem, don't you let him drop."

"No, no, — to be sure not," said Christian. "Come along here. We 'll go to the Back Brewery wall first."

"No, no; don't you let me drop. Give me a shilling any day you like, and I 'll tell you more nor you 'll hear from Spilkins in a week. There isna many men like me. I carried pots for fifteen year off and on, — what do you think o' that now, for a man as might ha' lived up there at Trounsem Park, and snared his own game? Which I 'd ha' done," said Tommy, wagging his head at Christian in the dimness undisturbed by gas. "None o' your shooting for me, — it 's two to one you 'll miss. Snaring 's more fishing-like. You bait your hook, and if it isna the fishes' good-will to come, that 's nothing again' the sporting genelman. And that 's what I say by snaring."

"But if you 'd a right to the Transome estate, how was it you were kept out of it, old boy? It was some foul shame or other, eh?"

"It 's the law, — that 's what it is. You 're a good sort o' chap; I don't mind telling you. There 's folks born to property, and there 's folks catch hold on it; and the law 's made for them as catch hold. I 'm pretty deep; I see a good deal further than Spilkins. There was Ned Patch, the pedler, used to say to me, 'You canna read, Tommy,' says he. 'No; thank you,' says I; 'I 'm not going to crack my headpiece to make myself as big a fool as you.' I was fond o' Ned. Many 's the pot we 've had together."

"I see well enough you 're deep, Tommy. How came you to know you were born to property?"

"It was the regester, — the parish regester," said Tommy, with his knowing wag of the head, "that shows as you was born. I allays felt it inside me as I was somebody, and I could see other chaps thought it on me too; and so one day at Littleshaw, where I kep ferrets and a little bit of a public, there comes a fine man looking after me, and walking me up and down wi' questions. And I made out from the clerk as he 'd been at the regester; and I gave the clerk a pot or two, and he got it off our parson as the name o' Trounsem was a great name hereabout. And I waits a bit for my fine man to come again. Thinks I, if there 's property wants a right owner, I shall be called for; for I did n't know the law then. And I waited and waited, till I see'd no fun i' waiting. So I parted wi' my public and my ferrets, — for she was dead a'ready, my wife was, and I had n't no 'cumbrance. And off I started a pretty long walk to this country-side, for I could walk for a wager in them days."

"Ah! well, here we are at the Back Brewery wall. Put down your paste and your basket now, old boy, and I 'll help you. You paste, and I 'll give you the bills, and then you can go on talking."

Tommy obeyed automatically, for he was now carried away by the rare opportunity of talking to a new listener, and was only eager to go on with his story. As soon as his back was turned, and he was stooping over his paste-pot, Christian,

with quick adroitness, exchanged the placards in his own bag for those in Tommy's basket. Christian's placards had not been printed at Treby, but were a new lot which had been sent from Duffield that very day, — "highly spiced," Quorlen had said, "coming from a pen that was up to that sort of thing." Christian had read the first of the sheaf, and supposed they were all alike. He proceeded to hand one to Tommy, and said, —

"Here, old boy, paste this over the other. And so, when you got into this country-side, what did you do?"

"Do? Why, I put up at a good public and ordered the best, for I 'd a bit o' money in my pocket; and I axed about, and they said to me, if it 's Trounsem business you 're after, you go to Lawyer Jermyn. And I went; and says I, going along, he 's maybe the fine man as walked me up and down. But no such thing. I 'll tell you what Lawyer Jermyn was. He stands you there, and holds you away from him wi' a pole three yard long. He stares at you, and says nothing, till you feel like a Tomfool; and then he threats you to set the justice on you; and then he 's sorry for you, and hands you money, and preaches you a sarmint, and tells you you 're a poor man, and he 'll give you a bit of advice — and you 'd better not be meddling wi' things belonging to the law, else you 'll be catched up in a big wheel and fly to bits. And I went of a cold sweat, and I wished I might never come i' sight o' Lawyer Jermyn again. But he says, if you keep i' this neighbourhood, behave yourself well, and I 'll pertect you. I were deep

enough, but it 's no use being deep, 'cause you can never know the law. And there 's times when the deepest fellow 's worst frightened."

"Yes, yes. There! Now for another placard. And so that was all?"

"All?" said Tommy, turning round and holding the paste-brush in suspense. "Don't you be running too quick. Thinks I, 'I 'll meddle no more. I 've got a bit o' money, — I 'll buy a basket, and be a potman. It 's a pleasant life. I shall live at publics and see the world, and pick up 'quaintance, and get a chanch penny.' But when I 'd turned into the Red Lion, and got myself warm again wi' a drop o' hot, something jumps into my head. Thinks I, 'Tommy, you 've done finely for yourself: you 're a rat as has broke up your house to take a journey, and show yourself to a ferret.' And then it jumps into my head: I 'd once two ferrets as turned on one another, and the little un killed the big un. Says I to the landlady, 'Missis, could you tell me of a lawyer,' says I, 'not very big or fine, but a second size, — a pig-potato, like?' 'That I can,' says she; 'there 's one now in the bar parlour.' 'Be so kind as bring us together,' says I. And she cries out, — I think I hear her now, — 'Mr. Johnson!' And what do you think?"

At this crisis in Tommy's story the grey clouds, which had been gradually thinning, opened sufficiently to let down the sudden moonlight, and show his poor battered old figure and face in the attitude and with the expression of a narrator sure of the coming

effect on his auditor; his body and neck stretched a little on one side, and his paste-brush held out with an alarming intention of tapping Christian's coat-sleeve at the right moment. Christian started to a safe distance, and said, —

"It 's wonderful. I can't tell what to think."

"Then never do you deny Old Nick," said Tommy, with solemnity. "I 've believed in him more ever since. Who was Johnson? Why, Johnson was the fine man as had walked me up and down with questions. And I out with it to him then and there. And he speaks me civil, and says, 'Come away wi' me, my good fellow.' And he told me a deal o' law. And he says, Whether you 're a Tommy Trounsem or no, it 's no good to you, but only to them as have got hold o' the property. If you was a Tommy Trounsem twenty times over, it 'ud be no good, for the law 's bought you out; and your life 's no good, only to them as have catched hold o' the property. The more you live, the more they 'll stick in. Not as they want you now, says he, — you 're no good to anybody, and you might howl like a dog for-iver, and the law 'ud take no notice on you. Says Johnson, 'I 'm doing a kind thing by you, to tell you.' For that 's the law. And if you want to know the law, master, you ask Johnson. I heard 'em say after, as he was an understrapper at Jermyn's. I 've never forgot it from that day to this. But I saw clear enough, as if the law had n't been again' me, the Trounsem estate 'ud ha' been mine. But folks are fools hereabouts, and I 've left off

talking. The more you tell 'em the truth, the more they 'll niver believe you. And I went and bought my basket and the pots, and — "

"Come, then, fire away," said Christian. "Here 's another placard."

"I 'm getting a bit dry, master."

"Well, then, make haste, and you 'll have something to drink all the sooner."

Tommy turned to his work again; and Christian, continuing his help, said, "And how long has Mr. Jermyn been employing you?"

"Oh, no particular time, — off and on; but a week or two ago he sees me upo' the road, and speaks to me uncommon civil, and tells me to go up to his office, and he 'll give me employ. And I was noways unwilling to stick the bills to get the family into Parl'ment. For there 's no man can help the law. And the family 's the family, whether you carry pots or no. Master, I 'm uncommon dry; my head 's a-turning round; it 's talking so long on end."

The unwonted excitement of poor Tommy 's memory was producing a reaction.

"Well, Tommy," said Christian, who had just made a discovery among the placards which altered the bent of his thoughts, "you may go back to the Cross-Keys now, if you like; here 's a half-crown for you to spend handsomely. I can't go back there myself just yet; but you may give my respects to Spilkins, and mind you paste the rest of the bills early to-morrow morning."

"Ay, ay. But don't you believe too much i' Spilkins," said Tommy, pocketing the half-crown, and showing his gratitude by giving

this advice, — "he 's no harm much, but weak. He thinks he 's at the bottom o' things because he scores you up. But I bear him no ill-will. Tommy Trounsem 's a good chap ; and any day you like to give me half-a-crown, I 'll tell you the same story over again. Not now ; I 'm dry. Come, help me up wi' these things ; you 're a younger chap than me. Well, I 'll tell Spilkins you 'll come again another day."

The moonlight, which had lit up poor Tommy's oratorical attitude, had served to light up for Christian the print of the placards. He had expected the copies to be various, and had turned them half over at different depths of the sheaf before drawing out those he offered to the bill-sticker. Suddenly the clearer light had shown him on one of them a name which was just then especially interesting to him, and all the more when occurring in a placard intended to dissuade the electors of North Loamshire from voting for the heir of the Transomes. He hastily turned over the bills that preceded and succeeded, that he might draw out and carry away all of this pattern ; for it might turn out to be wiser for him not to contribute to the publicity of handbills which contained allusions to Bycliffe *versus* Transome. There were about a dozen of them ; he pressed them together and thrust them into his pocket, returning all the rest to Tommy's basket. To take away this dozen might not be to prevent similar bills from being posted up elsewhere, but he had reason to believe that these were all of the same kind which had been sent to Treby from Duffield.

Christian's interest in his practical joke had

died out like a morning rushlight. Apart from this discovery in the placards, old Tommy's story had some indications in it that were worth pondering over. Where was that well-informed Johnson now? Was he still an understrapper of Jermyn's?

With this matter in his thoughts, Christian only turned in hastily at Quorlen's, threw down the black bag which contained the captured Radical handbills, said he had done the job, and hurried back to the Manor that he might study his problem.

CHAPTER XXIX

I doe believe that, as the gall has severall receptacles in several creatures, soe there's scarce any creature but hath that emunctorye somewhere. — Sir Thomas Browne.

FANCY what a game at chess would be if all the chessmen had passions and intellects, more or less small and cunning; if you were not only uncertain about your adversary's men, but a little uncertain also about your own; if your knight could shuffle himself on to a new square by the sly; if your bishop, in disgust at your castling, could wheedle your pawns out of their places; and if your pawns, hating you because they are pawns, could make away from their appointed posts that you might get checkmate on a sudden. You might be the longest-headed of deductive reasoners, and yet you might be beaten by your own pawns. You would be especially likely to be beaten, if you depended arrogantly on your mathematical imagination, and regarded your passionate pieces with contempt.

Yet this imaginary chess is easy compared with the game a man has to play against his fellow-men with other fellow-men for his instruments. He thinks himself sagacious, perhaps, because he trusts no bond except that of self-interest; but the only self-interest he can safely rely on is what seems to be such to the mind he would use or govern. Can he ever be sure of knowing this?

Matthew Jermyn was under no misgivings as to the fealty of Johnson. He had "been the making of Johnson;" and this seems to many men a reason for expecting devotion, in spite of the fact that they themselves, though very fond of their own persons and lives, are not at all devoted to the Maker they believe in. Johnson was a most serviceable subordinate. Being a man who aimed at respectability, a family man, who had a good church-pew, subscribed for engravings of banquet pictures where there were portraits of political celebrities, and wished his children to be more unquestionably genteel than their father, he presented all the more numerous handles of worldly motive by which a judicious superior might keep a hold on him. But this useful regard to respectability had its inconvenience in relation to such a superior: it was a mark of some vanity and some pride, which, if they were not touched just in the right handling place, were liable to become raw and sensitive. Jermyn was aware of Johnson's weaknesses, and thought he had flattered them sufficiently. But on the point of knowing when we are disagreeable, our human nature is fallible. Our lavender-water, our smiles, our compliments, and other polite falsities are constantly offensive when in the very nature of them they can only be meant to attract admiration and regard. Jermyn had often been unconsciously disagreeable to Johnson, over and above the constant offence of being an ostentatious patron. He would never let Johnson dine with his wife and daughters; he would not himself dine at Johnson's house when he was in town. He often did

what was equivalent to pooh-poohing his conversation by not even appearing to listen, and by suddenly cutting it short with a query on a new subject. Jermyn was able and politic enough to have commanded a great deal of success in his life, but he could not help being handsome, arrogant, fond of being heard, indisposed to any kind of comradeship, amorous and bland towards women, cold and self-contained towards men. You will hear very strong denials that an attorney's being handsome could enter into the dislike he excited; but conversation consists a good deal in the denial of what is true. From the British point of view masculine beauty is regarded very much as it is in the drapery business; as good solely for the fancy department, — for young noblemen, artists, poets, and the clergy. Some one who, like Mr. Lingon, was disposed to revile Jermyn (perhaps it was Sir Maximus), had called him "a cursed, sleek, handsome, long-winded, overbearing sycophant;" epithets which expressed, rather confusedly, the mingled character of the dislike he excited. And serviceable John Johnson, himself sleek, and mindful about his broadcloth and his cambric fronts, had what he considered "spirit" enough within him to feel that dislike of Jermyn gradually gathering force through years of obligation and subjection, till it had become an actuating motive disposed to use an opportunity, if not to watch for one.

It was not this motive, however, but rather the ordinary course of business, which accounted for Johnson's playing a double part as an electioneering agent. What men do in elections is

not to be classed either among sins or marks of grace: it would be profane to include business in religion; and conscience refers to failure, not to success. Still, the sense of being galled by Jermyn's harness was an additional reason for cultivating all relations that were independent of him; and pique at Harold Transome's behaviour to him in Jermyn's office perhaps gave all the more zest to Johnson's use of his pen and ink when he wrote a handbill in the service of Garstin, and Garstin's incomparable agent, Putty, full of innuendoes against Harold Transome, as a descendant of the Durfey-Transomes. It is a natural subject of self-congratulation to a man, when special knowledge, gained long ago without any forecast, turns out to afford a special inspiration in the present; and Johnson felt a new pleasure in the consciousness that he of all people in the world next to Jermyn had the most intimate knowledge of the Transome affairs. Still better, — some of these affairs were secrets of Jermyn's. If in an uncomplimentary spirit he might have been called Jermyn's "man of straw," it was a satisfaction to know that the unreality of the man John Johnson was confined to his appearance in annuity deeds, and that elsewhere he was solid, locomotive, and capable of remembering anything for his own pleasure and benefit. To act with doubleness towards a man whose own conduct was double, was so near an approach to virtue that it deserved to be called by no meaner name than Diplomacy.

By such causes it came to pass that Christian held in his hands a bill in which Jermyn was playfully alluded to as Mr. German Cozen, who

won games by clever shuffling and odd tricks without any honour, and backed Durfey's crib against Bycliffe, — in which it was adroitly implied that the so-called head of the Transomes was only the tail of the Durfeys, — and that some said the Durfeys would have died out and left their nest empty if it had not been for their German Cozen.

Johnson had not dared to use any recollections except such as might credibly exist in other minds besides his own. In the truth of the case, no one but himself had the prompting to recall these outworn scandals; but it was likely enough that such foul-winged things should be revived by election heats for Johnson to escape all suspicion.

Christian could gather only dim and uncertain inferences from this flat irony and heavy joking; but one chief thing was clear to him. He had been right in his conjecture that Jermyn's interest about Bycliffe had its source in some claim of Bycliffe's on the Transome property. And then there was that story of the old bill-sticker's, which, closely considered, indicated that the right of the present Transomes depended, or at least had depended, on the continuance of some other lives. Christian in his time had gathered enough legal notions to be aware that possession by one man sometimes depended on the life of another; that a man might sell his own interest in property, and the interest of his descendants, while a claim on that property would still remain to some one else than the purchaser, supposing the descendants became extinct, and the interest they had

sold were at an end. But under what conditions the claim might be valid or void in any particular case, was all darkness to him. Suppose Bycliffe had any such claim on the Transome estates; how was Christian to know whether at the present moment it was worth anything more than a bit of rotten parchment? Old Tommy Trounsem had said that Johnson knew all about it. But even if Johnson were still above ground, — and all Johnsons are mortal, — he might still be an understrapper of Jermyn's, in which case his knowledge would be on the wrong side of the hedge for the purposes of Henry Scaddon. His immediate care must be to find out all he could about Johnson. He blamed himself for not having questioned Tommy further while he had him at command; but on this head the bill-sticker could hardly know more than the less dilapidated denizens of Treby.

Now it had happened that during the weeks in which Christian had been at work in trying to solve the enigma of Jermyn's interest about Bycliffe, Johnson's mind also had been somewhat occupied with suspicion and conjecture as to new information on the subject of the old Bycliffe claims which Jermyn intended to conceal from him. The letter which, after his interview with Christian, Jermyn had written with a sense of perfect safety to his faithful ally Johnson, was, as we know, written to a Johnson who had found his self-love incompatible with that faithfulness of which it was supposed to be the foundation. Anything that the patron felt it inconvenient for his obliged friend

and servant to know, became by that very fact an object of peculiar curiosity. The obliged friend and servant secretly doated on his patron's inconvenience, provided that he himself did not share it; and conjecture naturally became active.

Johnson's legal imagination, being very differently furnished from Christian's, was at no loss to conceive conditions under which there might arise a new claim on the Transome estates. He had before him the whole history of the settlement of those estates made a hundred years ago by John Justus Transome, entailing them, whilst in his possession, on his son Thomas and his heirs-male, with remainder to the Bycliffes in fee. He knew that Thomas, son of John Justus, proving a prodigal, had, without the knowledge of his father, the tenant in possession, sold his own and his descendants' rights to a lawyer-cousin named Durfey; that, therefore, the title of the Durfey-Transomes, in spite of that old Durfey's tricks to show the contrary, depended solely on the purchase of the "base fee" thus created by Thomas Transome; and that the Bycliffes were the "remainder-men" who might fairly oust the Durfey-Transomes if ever the issue of the prodigal Thomas went clean out of existence, and ceased to represent a right which he had bargained away from them.

Johnson, as Jermyn's subordinate, had been closely cognizant of the details concerning the suit instituted by successive Bycliffes, of whom Maurice Christian Bycliffe was the last, on the plea that the extinction of Thomas Transome's

line had actually come to pass, — a weary suit, which had eaten into the fortunes of two families, and had only made the canker-worms fat. The suit had closed with the death of Maurice Christian Bycliffe in prison; but before his death, Jermyn's exertions to get evidence that there was still issue of Thomas Transome's line surviving, as a security of the Durfey title, had issued in the discovery of a Thomas Transome at Littleshaw, in Stonyshire, who was the representative of a pawned inheritance. The death of Maurice had made this discovery useless, — had made it seem the wiser part to say nothing about it; and the fact had remained a secret known only to Jermyn and Johnson. No other Bycliffe was known or believed to exist, and the Durfey-Transomes might be considered safe, unless — yes, there was an "unless" which Johnson could conceive: an heir or heiress of the Bycliffes — if such a personage turned out to be in existence — might some time raise a new and valid claim when once informed that wretched old Tommy Trounsem the bill-sticker, tottering drunkenly on the edge of the grave, was the last issue remaining above ground from that dissolute Thomas who played his Esau part a century before. While the poor old bill-sticker breathed, the Durfey-Transomes could legally keep their possession in spite of a possible Bycliffe proved real; but not when the parish had buried the bill-sticker.

Still, it is one thing to conceive conditions, and another to see any chance of proving their existence. Johnson at present had no glimpse of such a chance; and even if he ever gained

the glimpse, he was not sure that he should ever make any use of it. His inquiries of Medwin, in obedience to Jermyn's letter, had extracted only a negative as to any information possessed by the lawyers of Bycliffe concerning a marriage or expectation of offspring on his part. But Johnson felt not the less stung by curiosity to know what Jermyn had found out; that he had found something in relation to a possible Bycliffe, Johnson felt pretty sure. And he thought with satisfaction that Jermyn could not hinder him from knowing what he already knew about Thomas Transome's issue. Many things might occur to alter his policy and give a new value to facts. Was it certain that Jermyn would always be fortunate?

When greed and unscrupulousness exhibit themselves on a grand historical scale, and there is question of peace or war or amicable partition, it often occurs that gentlemen of high diplomatic talents have their minds bent on the same object from different points of view. Each, perhaps, is thinking of a certain duchy or province, with a view to arranging the ownership in such a way as shall best serve the purposes of the gentleman with high diplomatic talents in whom each is more especially interested. But these select minds in high office can never miss their aims from ignorance of each other's existence or whereabouts. Their high titles may be learned even by common people from every pocket almanac.

But with meaner diplomatists, who might be mutually useful, such ignorance is often obstructive. Mr. John Johnson and Mr. Chris-

tian, otherwise Henry Scaddon, might have had a concentration of purpose and an ingenuity of device fitting them to make a figure in the parcelling of Europe, and yet they might never have met, simply because Johnson knew nothing of Christian, and because Christian did not know where to find Johnson.

CHAPTER XXX

> His nature is too noble for the world:
> He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for his power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
> What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
> And, being angry, doth forget that ever
> He heard the name of death.
>
> *Coriolanus.*

CHRISTIAN and Johnson did meet, however, by means that were quite incalculable. The incident which brought them into communication was due to Felix Holt, who of all men in the world had the least affinity either for the industrious or the idle parasite.

Mr. Lyon had urged Felix to go to Duffield on the 15th of December, to witness the nomination of the candidates for North Loamshire. The minister wished to hear what took place; and the pleasure of gratifying him helped to outweigh some opposing reasons.

"I shall get into a rage at something or other," Felix had said. "I 've told you one of my weak points. Where I have any particular business, I must incur the risks my nature brings. But I 've no particular business at Duffield. However, I 'll make a holiday and go. By dint of seeing folly, I shall get lessons in patience."

The weak point to which Felix referred was his liability to be carried completely out of his own mastery by indignant anger. His strong health, his renunciation of selfish claims, his

habitual preoccupation with large thoughts and with purposes independent of every-day casualties, secured him a fine and even temper, free from moodiness or irritability. He was full of long-suffering towards his unwise mother, who "pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his soul was vexed;" he had chosen to fill his days in a way that required the utmost exertion of patience, that required those little rill-like outflowings of goodness which in minds of great energy must be fed from deep sources of thought and passionate devotedness. In this way his energies served to make him gentle; and now, in this twenty-sixth year of his life, they had ceased to make him angry, except in the presence of something that roused his deep indignation. When once exasperated, the passionateness of his nature threw off the yoke of a long-trained consciousness in which thought and emotion had been more and more completely mingled, and concentrated itself in a rage as ungovernable as that of boyhood. He was thoroughly aware of the liability, and knew that in such circumstances he could not answer for himself. Sensitive people with feeble frames have often the same sort of fury within them; but they are themselves shattered, and shatter nothing. Felix had a terrible arm: he knew that he was dangerous; and he avoided the conditions that might cause him exasperation, as he would have avoided intoxicating drinks if he had been in danger of intemperance.

The nomination-day was a great epoch of successful trickery, or, to speak in a more par-

liamentary manner, of war-stratagem, on the part of skilful agents. And Mr. Johnson had his share of inward chuckling and self-approval, as one who might justly expect increasing renown, and be some day in as general request as the great Putty himself. To have the pleasure and the praise of electioneering ingenuity, and also to get paid for it without too much anxiety whether the ingenuity will achieve its ultimate end, perhaps gives to some select persons a sort of satisfaction in their superiority to their more agitated fellow-men that is worthy to be classed with those generous enjoyments of having the truth chiefly to yourself, and of seeing others in danger of drowning while you are high and dry, which seem to have been regarded as unmixed privileges by Lucretius and Lord Bacon.

One of Mr. Johnson's great successes was this. Spratt, the hated manager of the Sproxton Colliery, in careless confidence that the colliers and other labourers under him would follow his orders, had provided carts to carry some loads of voteless enthusiasm to Duffield on behalf of Garstin ; enthusiasm which, being already paid for by the recognized benefit of Garstin's existence as a capitalist with a share in the Sproxton mines, was not to cost much in the form of treating. A capitalist was held worthy of pious honour as the cause why working-men existed. But Mr. Spratt did not sufficiently consider that a cause which has to be proved by argument or testimony is not an object of passionate devotion to colliers: a visible cause of beer acts on them much more strongly. And

even if there had been any love of the far-off Garstin, hatred of the too immediate Spratt would have been the stronger motive. Hence Johnson's calculations, made long ago with Chubb, the remarkable publican, had been well founded, and there had been diligent care to supply treating at Duffield in the name of Transome. After the election was over, it was not improbable that there would be much friendly joking between Putty and Johnson as to the success of this trick against Putty's employer, and Johnson would be conscious of rising in the opinion of his celebrated senior.

For the show of hands and the cheering, the hustling and the pelting, the roaring and the hissing, the hard hits with small missiles, and the soft hits with small jokes, were strong enough on the side of Transome to balance the similar "demonstrations" for Garstin, even with the Debarry interest in his favour. And the inconvenient presence of Spratt was early got rid of by a dexterously managed accident, which sent him bruised and limping from the scene of action. Mr. Chubb had never before felt so thoroughly that the occasion was up to a level with his talents, while the clear daylight in which his virtue would appear when at the election he voted, as his duty to himself bound him, for Garstin only, gave him thorough repose of conscience.

Felix Holt was the only person looking on at the senseless exhibitions of this nomination-day, who knew from the beginning the history of the trick with the Sproxton men. He had been aware all along that the treating at Chubb's had

been continued, and that so far Harold Transome's promise had produced no good fruits; and what he was observing to-day, as he watched the uproarious crowd, convinced him that the whole scheme would be carried out just as if he had never spoken about it. He could be fair enough to Transome to allow that he might have wished, and yet have been unable, with his notions of success, to keep his promise; and his bitterness towards the candidate only took the form of contemptuous pity; for Felix was not sparing in his contempt for men who put their inward honour in pawn by seeking the prizes of the world. His scorn fell too readily on the fortunate. But when he saw Johnson passing to and fro, and speaking to Jermyn on the hustings, he felt himself getting angry, and jumped off the wheel of the stationary cart on which he was mounted, that he might no longer be in sight of this man, whose vitiating cant had made his blood hot and his fingers tingle on the first day of encountering him at Sproxton. It was a little too exasperating to look at this pink-faced rotund specimen of prosperity, to witness the power for evil that lay in his vulgar cant, backed by another man's money, and to know that such stupid iniquity flourished the flags of Reform and Liberalism, and justice to the needy. While the roaring and the scuffling were still going on, Felix, with his thick stick in his hand, made his way through the crowd, and walked on through the Duffield streets, till he came out on a grassy suburb, where the houses surrounded a small common. Here he walked about in the breezy air, and ate his bread and

apples, telling himself that this angry haste of his about evils that could only be remedied slowly, could be nothing else than obstructive, and might some day — he saw it so clearly that the thought seemed like a presentiment — be obstructive of his own work.

"Not to waste energy, to apply force where it would tell, to do small work close at hand, not waiting for speculative chances of heroism, but preparing for them," — these were the rules he had been constantly urging on himself. But what could be a greater waste than to beat a scoundrel who had law and opodeldoc at command? After this meditation, Felix felt cool and wise enough to return into the town, not, however, intending to deny himself the satisfaction of a few pungent words wherever there was place for them. Blows are sarcasms turned stupid; wit is a form of force that leaves the limbs at rest.

Anything that could be called a crowd was no longer to be seen. The show of hands having been pronounced to be in favour of Debarry and Transome, and a poll having been demanded for Garstin, the business of the day might be considered at an end. But in the street where the hustings were erected, and where the great hotels stood, there were many groups, as well as strollers and steady walkers to and fro. Men in superior great-coats and well-brushed hats were awaiting with more or less impatience an important dinner, either at the Crown, which was Debarry's house, or at the Three Cranes, which was Garstin's, or at the Fox and Hounds, which was Transome's. Knots of sober retailers, who

had already dined, were to be seen at some shop-doors; men in very shabby coats and miscellaneous head-coverings, inhabitants of Duffield and not county voters, were lounging about in dull silence, or listening, some to a grimy man in a flannel shirt, hatless and with turbid red hair, who was insisting on political points with much more ease than had seemed to belong to the gentlemen speakers on the hustings, and others to a Scotch vendor of articles useful to sell, whose unfamiliar accent seemed to have a guarantee of truth in it wanting as an association with every-day English. Some rough-looking pipe-smokers or distinguished cigar-smokers chose to walk up and down in isolation and silence. But the majority of those who had shown a burning interest in the nomination had disappeared, and cockades no longer studded a close-pressed crowd, like, and also very unlike, meadow flowers among the grass. The street pavement was strangely painted with fragments of perishable missiles ground flat under heavy feet; but the workers were resting from their toil, and the buzz and tread and the fitfully discernible voices seemed like stillness to Felix after the roar with which the wide space had been filled when he left it.

The group round the speaker in the flannel shirt stood at the corner of a side-street, and the speaker himself was elevated by the head and shoulders above his hearers, not because he was tall, but because he stood on a projecting stone. At the opposite corner of the turning was the great inn of the Fox and Hounds, and this was the ultra-Liberal quarter of the High

Street. Felix was at once attracted by this group; he liked the look of the speaker, whose bare arms were powerfully muscular, though he had the pallid complexion of a man who lives chiefly amidst the heat of furnaces. He was leaning against the dark stone building behind him with folded arms, the grimy paleness of his shirt and skin standing out in high relief against the dark stone building behind him. He lifted up one forefinger, and marked his emphasis with it as he spoke. His voice was high and not strong; but Felix recognized the fluency and the method of a habitual preacher or lecturer.

"It 's the fallacy of all monopolists," he was saying. "We know what monopolists are: men who want to keep a trade all to themselves, under the pretence that they 'll furnish the public with a better article. We know what that comes to: in some countries a poor man can't afford to buy a spoonful of salt, and yet there 's salt enough in the world to pickle every living thing in it. That 's the sort of benefit monopolists do to mankind. And these are the men who tell us we 're to let politics alone; they 'll govern us better without our knowing anything about it. We must mind our business; we are ignorant; we 've no time to study great questions. But I tell them this: the greatest question in the world is, how to give every man a man's share in what goes on in life —"

"Hear, hear!" said Felix, in his sonorous voice, which seemed to give a new impressiveness to what the speaker had said. Every one looked at him; the well-washed face and its

educated expression, along with a dress more careless than that of most well-to-do workmen on a holiday, made his appearance strangely arresting.

"Not a pig's share," the speaker went on, "not a horse's share, not the share of a machine fed with oil only to make it work and nothing else. It is n't a man's share just to mind your pin-making, or your glass-blowing, and higgle about your own wages, and bring up your family to be ignorant sons of ignorant fathers, and no better prospect; that 's a slave's share; we want a freeman's share, and that is to think and speak and act about what concerns us all, and see whether these fine gentlemen who undertake to govern us are doing the best they can for us. They 've got the knowledge, say they. Very well, we 've got the wants. There 's many a one would be idle if hunger did n't pinch him; but the stomach sets us to work. There 's a fable told where the nobles are the belly and the people the members. But I make another sort of fable. I say we are the belly that feels the pinches, and we 'll set these aristocrats, these great people who call themselves our brains, to work at some way of satisfying us a bit better. The aristocrats are pretty sure to try and govern for their own benefit; but how are we to be sure they 'll try and govern for ours? They must be looked after, I think, like other workmen. We must have what we call inspectors, to see whether the work 's well done for us. We want to send our inspectors to Parliament. Well, they say, you 've got the Reform Bill; what more can you want? Send your inspec-

tors. But I say, the Reform Bill is a trick, — it 's nothing but swearing-in special constables to keep the aristocrats safe in their monopoly ; it 's bribing some of the people with votes to make them hold their tongues about giving votes to the rest. I say, if a man does n't beg or steal, but works for his bread, the poorer and the more miserable he is, the more he 'd need have a vote to send an inspector to Parliament, — else the man who is worst off is likely to be forgotten ; and I say, he 's the man who ought to be first remembered. Else what does their religion mean ? Why do they build churches and endow them that their sons may get paid well for preaching a Saviour, and making themselves as little like Him as can be ? If I want to believe in Jesus Christ, I must shut my eyes for fear I should see a parson. And what 's a bishop ? A bishop 's a parson dressed up, who sits in the House of Lords to help and throw out Reform Bills. And because it 's hard to get anything in the shape of a man to dress himself up like that, and do such work, they give him a palace for it, and plenty of thousands a-year. And then they cry out, ' The Church is in danger,' — ' the poor man's Church.' And why is it the poor man's Church ? Because he can have a seat for nothing. I think it *is* for nothing ; for it would be hard to tell what he gets by it. If the poor man had a vote in the matter, I think he 'd choose a different sort of a Church to what that is. But do you think the aristocrats will ever alter it, if the belly does n't pinch them? Not they. It 's a part of their monopoly. They 'll supply us with our religion like every-

thing else, and get a profit on it. They 'll give us plenty of heaven. We may have land *there.* That 's the sort of religion they like, — a religion that gives us working-men heaven, and nothing else. But we 'll offer to change with 'em. We 'll give them back some of their heaven, and take it out in something for us and our children in this world. They don't seem to care so much about heaven themselves till they feel the gout very bad; but you won't get them to give up anything else, if you don't pinch 'em for it. And to pinch them enough, we must get the suffrage, we must get votes, that we may send the men to Parliament who will do our work for us; and we must have Parliament dissolved every year, that we may change our man if he does n't do what we want him to do; and we must have the country divided so that the little kings of the counties can't do as they like, but must be shaken up in one bag with us. I say, if we working-men are ever to get a man's share, we must have universal suffrage, and annual Parliaments, and the vote by ballot, and electoral districts."

"No! — something else before all that," said Felix, again startling the audience into looking at him. But the speaker glanced coldly at him and went on.

"That 's what Sir Francis Burdett went in for fifteen years ago; and it 's the right thing for us, if it was Tomfool who went in for it. You must lay hold of such handles as you can. I don't believe much in liberal aristocrats; but if there 's any fine carved gold-headed stick of an aristocrat will make a broom-stick of himself,

I 'll lose no time but I 'll sweep with him. And that 's what I think about Transome. And if any of you have acquaintance among county voters, give 'em a hint that you wish 'em to vote for Transome."

At the last word the speaker stepped down from his slight eminence, and walked away rapidly, like a man whose leisure was exhausted, and who must go about his business. But he had left an appetite in his audience for further oratory, and one of them seemed to express a general sentiment as he turned immediately to Felix, and said, " Come, sir, what do you say ? "

Felix did at once what he would very likely have done without being asked, — he stepped on to the stone, and took off his cap by an instinctive prompting that always led him to speak uncovered. The effect of his figure in relief against the stone background was unlike that of the previous speaker. He was considerably taller, his head and neck were more massive, and the expression of his mouth and eyes was something very different from the mere acuteness and rather hard-lipped antagonism of the trades-union man. Felix Holt's face had the look of habitual meditative abstraction from objects of mere personal vanity or desire, which is the peculiar stamp of culture, and makes a very roughly cut face worthy to be called " the human face divine." Even lions and dogs know a distinction between men's glances ; and doubtless those Duffield men, in the expectation with which they looked up at Felix, were unconsciously influenced by the grandeur of his full yet firm mouth, and the calm clearness of his

gray eyes, which were somehow unlike what they were accustomed to see along with an old brown velveteen coat, and an absence of chin-propping. When he began to speak, the contrast of voice was still stronger than that of appearance. The man in the flannel shirt had not been heard — had probably not cared to be heard — beyond the immediate group of listeners. But Felix at once drew the attention of persons comparatively at a distance.

"In my opinion," he said, almost the moment after he was addressed, "that was a true word spoken by your friend when he said the great question was how to give every man a man's share in life. But I think he expects voting to do more towards it than I do. I want the working-men to have power. I 'm a working-man myself, and I don't want to be anything else. But there are two sorts of power. There 's a power to do mischief, — to undo what has been done with great expense and labour, to waste and destroy, to be cruel to the weak, to lie and quarrel, and to talk poisonous nonsense. That 's the sort of power that ignorant numbers have. It never made a joint stool or planted a potato. Do you think it 's likely to do much towards governing a great country, and making wise laws, and giving shelter, food, and clothes to millions of men? Ignorant power comes in the end to the same thing as wicked power; it makes misery. It 's another sort of power that I want us working-men to have, and I can see plainly enough that our all having votes will do little towards it at present. I hope we, or the children that come

after us, will get plenty of political power some time. I tell everybody plainly, I hope there will be great changes, and that some time, whether we live to see it or not, men will have come to be ashamed of things they 're proud of now. But I should like to convince you that votes would never give you political power worth having while things are as they are now, and that if you go the right way to work you may get power sooner without votes. Perhaps all you who hear me are sober men, who try to learn as much of the nature of things as you can, and to be as little like fools as possible. A fool or idiot is one who expects things to happen that never can happen; he pours milk into a can without a bottom, and expects the milk to stay there. The more of such vain expectations a man has, the more he is of a fool or idiot. And if any working-man expects a vote to do for him what it never can do, he 's foolish to that amount, if no more. I think that 's clear enough, eh ? "

" Hear, hear ! " said several voices, but they were not those of the original group; they belonged to some strollers who had been attracted by Felix Holt's vibrating voice, and were Tories from the Crown. Among them was Christian, who was smoking a cigar with a pleasure he always felt in being among people who did not know him, and doubtless took him to be something higher than he really was. Hearers from the Fox and Hounds also were slowly adding themselves to the nucleus. Felix, accessible to the pleasure of being listened to, went on with more and more animation, —

"The way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations, and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things. The men who have had true thoughts about water, and what it will do when it is turned into steam and under all sorts of circumstances, have made themselves a great power in the world; they are turning the wheels of engines that will help to change most things. But no engines would have done, if there had been false notions about the way water would act. Now, all the schemes about voting and districts and annual Parliaments and the rest are engines, and the water or steam — the force that is to work them — must come out of human nature, — out of men's passions, feelings, desires. Whether the engines will do good work or bad depends on these feelings; and if we have false expectations about men's characters, we are very much like the idiot who thinks he 'll carry milk in a can without a bottom. In my opinion, the notions about what mere voting will do are very much of that sort."

"That 's very fine," said a man in dirty fustian, with a scornful laugh. "But how are we to get the power without votes?"

"I 'll tell you what 's the greatest power under heaven," said Felix, "and that is public opinion, — the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honourable and what is shameful. That 's the steam that is to work the engines. How can political freedom make us better, any more than a religion we don't believe in, if people laugh and wink when they see men abuse and

defile it? And while public opinion is what it is, — while men have no better beliefs about public duty, while corruption is not felt to be a damning disgrace, — while men are not ashamed in Parliament and out of it to make public questions which concern the welfare of millions a mere screen for their own petty private ends, — I say, no fresh scheme of voting will much mend our condition. For, take us workingmen of all sorts. Suppose out of every hundred who had a vote there were thirty who had some soberness, some sense to choose with, some good feeling to make them wish the right thing for all. And suppose there were seventy out of the hundred who were, half of them, not sober, who had no sense to choose one thing in politics more than another, and who had so little good feeling in them that they wasted on their own drinking the money that should have helped to feed and clothe their wives and children; and another half of them who, if they did n't drink, were too ignorant or mean or stupid to see any good for themselves better than pocketing a five-shilling piece when it was offered them. Where would be the political power of the thirty sober men? The power would lie with the seventy drunken and stupid votes; and I 'll tell you what sort of men would get the power, — what sort of men would end by returning whom they pleased to Parliament."

Felix had seen every face around him, and had particularly noticed a recent addition to his audience; but now he looked before him without appearing to fix his glance on any one. In spite of his cooling meditations an hour ago, his

pulse was getting quickened by indignation, and the desire to crush what he hated was likely to vent itself in articulation. His tone became more biting.

"They would be men who would undertake to do the business for a candidate, and return him; men who have no real opinions, but who pilfer the words of every opinion, and turn them into a cant which will serve their purpose at the moment; men who look out for dirty work to make their fortunes by, because dirty work wants little talent and no conscience; men who know all the ins and outs of bribery, because there is not a cranny in their own souls where a bribe can't enter. Such men as these will be the masters wherever there 's a majority of voters who care more for money, more for drink, more for some mean little end which is their own and nobody else's, than for anything that has ever been called Right in the world. For suppose there 's a poor voter named Jack, who has seven children, and twelve or fifteen shillings a-week wages, perhaps less. Jack can't read, — I don't say whose fault that is, — he never had the chance to learn; he knows so little that he perhaps thinks God made the poor-laws, and if anybody said the pattern of the workhouse was laid down in the Testament, he would n't be able to contradict them. What is poor Jack likely to do when he sees a smart stranger coming to him, who happens to be just one of those men that I say will be the masters till public opinion gets too hot for them? He 's a middle-sized man, we 'll say; stout, with coat upon coat of fine broadcloth,

open enough to show a fine gold chain : none of your dark, scowling men, but one with an innocent pink-and-white skin and very smooth light hair, — a most respectable man, who calls himself by a good, sound, well-known English name, — as Green, or Baker, or Wilson, or, let us say, Johnson — "

Felix was interrupted by an explosion of laughter from a majority of the bystanders. Some eyes had been turned on Johnson, who stood on the right hand of Felix, at the very beginning of the description, and these were gradually followed by others, till at last every hearer's attention was fixed on him, and the first burst of laughter from the two or three who knew the attorney's name let every one sufficiently into the secret to make the amusement common. Johnson, who had kept his ground till his name was mentioned, now turned away, looking unusually white after being unusually red, and feeling by an attorney's instinct for his pocket-book, as if he felt it was a case for taking down the names of witnesses.

All the well-dressed hearers turned away too, thinking they had had the cream of the speech in the joke against Johnson, which, as a thing worth telling, helped to recall them to the scene of dinner.

"Who is this Johnson?" said Christian to a young man who had been standing near him, and had been one of the first to laugh. Christian's curiosity had naturally been awakened by what might prove a golden opportunity.

"Oh, — a London attorney. He acts for Transome. That tremendous fellow at the

corner there is some red-hot Radical demagogue, and Johnson has offended him, I suppose; else he would n't have turned in that way on a man of their own party."

"I had heard there was a Johnson who was an understrapper of Jermyn's," said Christian.

"Well, so this man may have been, for what I know. But he 's a London man now, — a very busy fellow, — on his own legs in Bedford Row. Ha, ha! It 's capital, though, when these Liberals get a slap in the face from the working-men they 're so very fond of."

Another turn along the street enabled Christian to come to a resolution. Having seen Jermyn drive away an hour before, he was in no fear; he walked at once to the Fox and Hounds, and asked to speak to Mr. Johnson. A brief interview, in which Christian ascertained that he had before him the Johnson mentioned by the bill-sticker, issued in the appointment of a longer one at a later hour; and before they left Duffield they had come not exactly to a mutual understanding, but to an exchange of information mutually welcome.

Christian had been very cautious in the commencement, only intimating that he knew something important which some chance hints had induced him to think might be interesting to Mr. Johnson, but that this entirely depended on how far he had a common interest with Mr. Jermyn. Johnson replied that he had much business in which that gentleman was not concerned, but that to a certain extent they had a common interest. Probably then, Christian observed, the affairs of the Transome estate were

part of the business in which Mr. Jermyn and Mr. Johnson might be understood to represent each other, — in which case he need not detain Mr. Johnson? At this hint Johnson could not conceal that he was becoming eager. He had no idea what Christian's information was, but there were many grounds on which Johnson desired to know as much as he could about the Transome affairs independently of Jermyn. By little and little an understanding was arrived at. Christian told of his interview with Tommy Trounsem, and stated that if Johnson could show him whether the knowledge could have any legal value, he could bring evidence that a legitimate child of Bycliffe's existed: he felt certain of his fact and of his proof. Johnson explained that in this case the death of the old bill-sticker would give the child the first valid claim to the Bycliffe heirship; that for his own part he should be glad to further a true claim, but that caution must be observed. How did Christian know that Jermyn was informed on this subject? Christian, more and more convinced that Johnson would be glad to counteract Jermyn, at length became explicit about Esther, but still withheld his own real name, and the nature of his relations with Bycliffe. He said he would bring the rest of his information when Mr. Johnson took the case up seriously, and place it in the hands of Bycliffe's old lawyers, — of course he would do that? Johnson replied that he would certainly do that; but that there were legal niceties which Mr. Christian was probably not acquainted with; that Esther's claim had not yet accrued; and that hurry was useless.

The two men parted, each in distrust of the other, but each well pleased to have learned something. Johnson was not at all sure how he should act, but thought it likely that events would soon guide him. Christian was beginning to meditate a way of securing his own ends without depending in the least on Johnson's procedure. It was enough for him that he was now assured of Esther's legal claim on the Transome estates.

CHAPTER XXXI

In the copia of the factious language the word Tory was entertained, . . . and being a vocal clever-sounding word, readily pronounced, it kept its hold, and took possession of the foul mouths of the faction. . . . The Loyalists began to cheer up and to take heart of grace, and in the working of this crisis, according to the common laws of scolding, they considered which way to make payment for so much of Tory as they had been treated with, to clear scores. . . . Immediately the train took, and ran like wildfire and became general. And so the account of Tory was balanced, and soon began to run up a sharp score on the other side. — NORTH'S *Examen*, p. 321.

AT last the great epoch of the election for North Loamshire had arrived. The roads approaching Treby were early traversed by a larger number of vehicles, horsemen, and also foot-passengers than were ever seen there at the annual fair. Treby was the polling-place for many voters whose faces were quite strange in the town ; and if there were some strangers who did not come to poll, though they had business not unconnected with the election, they were not liable to be regarded with suspicion or especial curiosity. It was understood that no division of a county had ever been more thoroughly canvassed, and that there would be a hard run between Garstin and Transome. Mr. Johnson's headquarters were at Duffield ; but it was a maxim which he repeated after the great Putty, that a capable agent makes himself omnipresent ; and quite apart from the express between him and Jermyn, Mr. John Johnson's presence in the universe had potent effects on this December day at Treby Magna.

A slight drizzling rain which was observed by

some Tories who looked out of their bedroom windows before six o'clock, made them hope that, after all, the day might pass off better than alarmists had expected. The rain was felt to be somehow on the side of quiet and Conservatism; but soon the breaking of the clouds and the mild gleams of a December sun brought back previous apprehensions. As there were already precedents for riot at a Reformed election, and as the Trebian district had had its confidence in the natural course of things somewhat shaken by a landed proprietor with an old name offering himself as a Radical candidate, the election had been looked forward to by many with a vague sense that it would be an occasion something like a fighting-match, when bad characters would probably assemble, and there might be struggles and alarms for respectable men, which would make it expedient for them to take a little neat brandy as a precaution beforehand and a restorative afterwards. The tenants on the Transome estate were comparatively fearless: poor Mr. Goffe, of Rabbit's End, considered that "one thing was as mauling as another," and that an election was no worse than the sheep-rot; while Mr. Dibbs, taking the more cheerful view of a prosperous man, reflected that if the Radicals were dangerous, it was safer to be on their side. It was the voters for Debarry and Garstin who considered that they alone had the right to regard themselves as targets for evil-minded men; and Mr. Crowder, if he could have got his ideas countenanced, would have recommended a muster of farm-servants with defensive pitchforks on the side of Church and King. But the

bolder men were rather gratified by the prospect of being groaned at, so that they might face about and groan in return.

Mr. Crow, the high constable of Treby, inwardly rehearsed a brief address to a riotous crowd in case it should be wanted, having been warned by the Rector that it was a primary duty on these occasions to keep a watch against provocation as well as violence. The Rector, with a brother magistrate who was on the spot, had thought it desirable to swear in some special constables; but the presence of loyal men not absolutely required for the polling was not looked at in the light of a provocation. The Benefit Clubs from various quarters made a show, some with the orange-coloured ribbons and streamers of the true Tory candidate, some with the mazarine of the Whig. The orange-coloured bands played "Auld Langsyne," and a louder mazarine band came across them with "Oh, whistle, and I will come to thee, my lad," — probably as the tune the most symbolical of Liberalism which their repertory would furnish. There was not a single club bearing the Radical blue: the Sproxton Club members wore the mazarine, and Mr. Chubb wore so much of it that he looked (at a sufficient distance) like a very large gentianella. It was generally understood that "these brave fellows," representing the fine institution of Benefit Clubs, and holding aloft the motto, "Let brotherly love continue," were a civil force calculated to encourage voters of sound opinions and keep up their spirits. But a considerable number of unadorned heavy navvies, colliers, and stone-pit men, who used their freedom as

British subjects to be present in Treby on this great occasion, looked like a possibly uncivil force whose politics were dubious until it was clearly seen for whom they cheered and for whom they groaned.

Thus the way up to the polling-booths was variously lined, and those who walked it, to whatever side they belonged, had the advantage of hearing from the opposite side what were the most marked defects or excesses in their personal appearance; for the Trebians of that day held, without being aware that they had Cicero's authority for it, that the bodily blemishes of an opponent were a legitimate ground for ridicule; but if the voter frustrated wit by being handsome, he was groaned at and satirized according to a formula in which the adjective was Tory, Whig, or Radical, as the case might be, and the substantive a blank to be filled up after the taste of the speaker.

Some of the more timid had chosen to go through this ordeal as early as possible in the morning. One of the earliest was Mr. Timothy Rose, the gentleman farmer from Leek Malton. He had left home with some foreboding, having swathed his more vital parts in layers of flannel, and put on two great-coats as a soft kind of armour. But reflecting with some trepidation that there were no resources for protecting his head, he once more wavered in his intention to vote; he once more observed to Mrs. Rose that these were hard times when a man of independent property was expected to vote "willy-nilly;" but finally, coerced by the sense that he should be looked ill on "in these times" if he

did not stand by the gentlemen round about, he set out in his gig, taking with him a powerful wagoner, whom he ordered to keep him in sight as he went to the polling-booth. It was hardly more than nine o'clock when Mr. Rose, having thus come up to the level of his times, cheered himself with a little cherry-brandy at the Marquis, drove away in a much more courageous spirit, and got down at Mr. Nolan's, just outside the town. The retired Londoner, he considered, was a man of experience, who would estimate properly the judicious course he had taken, and could make it known to others. Mr. Nolan was superintending the removal of some shrubs in his garden.

"Well, Mr. Nolan," said Rose, twinkling a self-complacent look over the red prominence of his cheeks, "have you been to give your vote yet?"

"No; all in good time. I shall go presently."

"Well, I would n't lose an hour, I would n't. I said to myself, if I 've got to do gentlemen a favour, I 'll do it at once. You see, I 've got no landlord, Nolan, — I 'm in that position o' life that I can be independent."

"Just so, my dear sir," said the wiry-faced Nolan, pinching his under-lip between his thumb and finger, and giving one of those wonderful universal shrugs, by which he seemed to be recalling all his garments from a tendency to disperse themselves. "Come in and see Mrs. Nolan?"

"No, no, thankye. Mrs. Rose expects me back. But, as I was saying, I 'm a independent man, and I consider it 's not my part to

show favour to one more than another, but to make things as even as I can. If I 'd been a tenant to anybody, well, in course I must have voted for my landlord, — that stands to sense. But I wish everybody well; and if one 's returned to Parliament more than another, nobody can say it 's my doing; for when you can vote for two, you can make things even. So I gave one to Debarry and one to Transome; and I wish Garstin no ill, but I can't help the odd number, and he hangs on to Debarry, they say."

"God bless me, sir," said Mr. Nolan, coughing down a laugh, "don't you perceive that you might as well have stayed at home and not voted at all, unless you would rather send a Radical to Parliament than a sober Whig?"

"Well, I 'm sorry you should have anything to say against what I 've done, Nolan," said Mr. Rose, rather crestfallen, though sustained by inward warmth. "I thought you 'd agree with me, as you 're a sensible man. But the most a independent man can do is to try and please all; and if he has n't the luck, — here 's wishing I may do it another time," added Mr. Rose, apparently confounding a toast with a salutation, for he put out his hand for a passing shake, and then stepped into his gig again.

At the time that Mr. Timothy Rose left the town, the crowd in King Street and in the market-place, where the polling-booths stood, was fluctuating. Voters as yet were scanty, and brave fellows who had come from any distance this morning, or who had sat up late drinking the night before, required some reinforcement of their strength and spirits. Every public-

house in Treby, not excepting the venerable and sombre Cross-Keys, was lively with changing and numerous company. Not, of course, that there was any treating: treating necessarily had stopped, from moral scruples, when once "the writs were out;" but there was drinking, which did equally well under any name.

Poor Tommy Trounsem, breakfasting here on Falstaff's proportion of bread, and something which, for gentility's sake, I will call sack, was more than usually victorious over the ills of life, and felt himself one of the heroes of the day. He had an immense light-blue cockade in his hat, and an amount of silver in a dirty little canvas bag which astonished himself. For some reason, at first inscrutable to him, he had been paid for his bill-sticking with great liberality, at Mr. Jermyn's office, in spite of his having been the victim of a trick by which he had once lost his own bills and pasted up Debarry's; but he soon saw that this was simply a recognition of his merit as "an old family kept out of its rights," and also of his peculiar share in an occasion when the family was to get into Parliament. Under these circumstances it was due from him that he should show himself prominently where business was going forward, and give additional value by his presence to every vote for Transome. With this view he got a half-pint bottle filled with his peculiar kind of "sack," and hastened back to the market-place, feeling good-natured and patronizing towards all political parties, and only so far partial as his family bound him to be.

But a disposition to concentrate at that ex-

tremity of King Street which issued in the market-place was not universal among the increasing crowd. Some of them seemed attracted towards another nucleus at the other extremity of King Street, near the Seven Stars. This was Garstin's chief house, where his committee sat, and it was also a point which must necessarily be passed by many voters entering the town on the eastern side. It seemed natural that the mazarine colors should be visible here, and that Pack, the tall "shepherd" of the Sproxton men, should be seen moving to and fro where there would be a frequent opportunity of cheering the voters for a gentleman who had the chief share in the Sproxton mines. But the side lanes and entries out of King Street were numerous enough to relieve any pressure if there was need to make way. The lanes had a distinguished reputation. Two of them had odours of brewing; one had a side entrance to Mr. Tiliot's wine and spirit vaults; up another Mr. Muscat's cheeses were frequently being unloaded; and even some of the entries had those cheerful suggestions of plentiful provision which were among the characteristics of Treby.

Between ten and eleven the voters came in more rapid succession, and the whole scene became spirited. Cheers, sarcasms, and oaths, which seemed to have a flavour of wit for many hearers, were beginning to be reinforced by more practical demonstrations, dubiously jocose. There was a disposition in the crowd to close and hem in the way for voters, either going or coming, until they had paid some kind of toll. It was difficult to see who set the example

in the transition from words to deeds. Some thought it was due to Jacob Cuff, a Tory charity-man, who was a well-known ornament of the pot-house, and gave his mind much leisure for amusing devices; but questions of origination in stirring periods are notoriously hard to settle. It is by no means necessary in human things that there should be only one beginner. This, however, is certain, — that Mr. Chubb, who wished it to be noticed that he voted for Garstin solely, was one of the first to get rather more notice than he wished, and that he had his hat knocked off and crushed in the interest of Debarry by Tories opposed to coalition. On the other hand, some said it was at the same time that Mr. Pink the saddler, being stopped on his way and made to declare that he was going to vote for Debarry, got himself well chalked as to his coat, and pushed up an entry, where he remained the prisoner of terror combined with the want of any back outlet, and never gave his vote that day.

The second Tory joke was performed with much gusto. The majority of the Transome tenants came in a body from the Ram Inn, with Mr. Banks the bailiff leading them. Poor Goffe was the last of them; and his worn melancholy look and forward-leaning gait gave the jocose Cuff the notion that the farmer was not what he called "compus." Mr. Goffe was cut off from his companions and hemmed in; asked, by voices with hot breath close to his ear, how many horses he had, how many cows, how many fat pigs; then jostled from one to another, who made trumpets with their hands, and deafened

him by telling him to vote for Debarry. In this way the melancholy Goffe was hustled on till he was at the polling-booth, — filled with confused alarms, the immediate alarm being that of having to go back in still worse fashion than he had come. Arriving in this way after the other tenants had left, he astonished all hearers who knew him for a tenant of the Transomes by saying "Debarry," and was jostled back trembling amid shouts of laughter.

By stages of this kind the fun grew faster, and was in danger of getting rather serious. The Tories began to feel that their jokes were returned by others of a heavier sort, and that the main strength of the crowd was not on the side of sound opinion, but might come to be on the side of sound cudgelling and kicking. The navvies and pitmen in dishabille seemed to be multiplying, and to be clearly not belonging to the party of Order. The shops were freely resorted to for various forms of playful missiles and weapons; and news came to the magistrates, watching from the large window of the Marquis, that a gentleman coming in on horseback at the other end of the street to vote for Garstin had had his horse turned round and frightened into a headlong gallop out of it again.

Mr. Crow and his subordinates, and all the special constables, felt that it was necessary to make some energetic effort, or else every voter would be intimidated and the poll must be adjourned. The Rector determined to get on horseback and go amidst the crowd with the constables; and he sent a message to Mr. Lin-

gon, who was at the Ram, calling on him to do the same. "Sporting Jack" was sure the good fellows meant no harm; but he was courageous enough to face any bodily dangers, and rode out in his brown leggings and coloured bandana, speaking persuasively.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when this sally was made: the constables and magistrates tried the most pacific measures, and they seemed to succeed. There was a rapid thinning of the crowd; the most boisterous disappeared, or seemed to do so by becoming quiet; missiles ceased to fly, and a sufficient way was cleared for voters along King Street. The magistrates returned to their quarters, and the constables took convenient posts of observation. Mr. Wace, who was one of Debarry's committee, had suggested to the Rector that it might be wise to send for the military from Duffield, with orders that they should station themselves at Hathercote, three miles off; there was so much property in the town that it would be better to make it secure against risks. But the Rector felt that this was not the part of a moderate and wise magistrate, unless the signs of riot recurred. He was a brave man, and fond of thinking that his own authority sufficed for the maintenance of the general good in Treby.

CHAPTER XXXII

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Never more
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before
Without the sense of that which I forbore —
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

MRS. BROWNING.

FELIX HOLT, seated at his work without his pupils, who had asked for a holiday with a notion that the wooden booths promised some sort of show, noticed about eleven o'clock that the noises which reached him from the main street were getting more and more tumultuous. He had long seen bad auguries for this election, but, like all people who dread the prophetic wisdom that ends in desiring the fulfilment of its own evil forebodings, he had checked himself with remembering that though many conditions were possible which might bring on violence, there were just as many which might avert it. There would, perhaps, be no other mischief than what he was already certain of. With these thoughts he had sat down quietly to his work, meaning not to vex his soul by going to look on at things he would fain have made different if he could.

But he was of a fibre that vibrated too strongly to the life around him to shut himself away in quiet, even from suffering and irremediable wrong. As the noises grew louder, and wrought more and more strongly on his imagination, he was obliged to lay down his delicate wheel-work. His mother came from her turnip-paring in the kitchen, where little Job was her companion, to observe that they must be killing everybody in the High Street, and that the election, which had never been before at Treby, must have come for a judgment; that there were mercies where you did n't look for them, and that she thanked God in his wisdom for making her live up a back street.

Felix snatched his cap and rushed out. But when he got to the turning into the market-place the magistrates were already on horseback there, the constables were moving about, and Felix observed that there was no strong spirit of resistance to them. He stayed long enough to see the partial dispersion of the crowd and the restoration of tolerable quiet, and then went back to Mrs. Holt to tell her that there was nothing to fear now; he was going out again, and she must not be in any anxiety at his absence. She might set by his dinner for him.

Felix had been thinking of Esther and her probable alarm at the noises that must have reached her more distinctly than they had reached him, for Malthouse Yard was removed but a little way from the main street. Mr. Lyon was away from home, having been called to preach charity sermons and attend

meetings in a distant town; and Esther with the plaintive Lyddy for her sole companion, was not cheerfully circumstanced. Felix had not been to see her yet since her father's departure, but to-day he gave way to new reasons.

"Miss Esther was in the garret," Lyddy said, trying to see what was going on. But before she was fetched she came running down the stairs, drawn by the knock at the door, which had shaken the small dwelling.

"I am so thankful to see you," she said eagerly. "Pray come in."

When she had shut the parlour door behind them, Felix said: "I suspected that you might have been made anxious by the noises. I came to tell you that things are quiet now. Though, indeed, you can hear that they are."

"I *was* frightened," said Esther. "The shouting and roaring of rude men is so hideous. It is a relief to me that my father is not at home, — that he is out of the reach of any danger he might have fallen into if he had been here. But I gave you credit for being in the midst of the danger," she added, smiling, with a determination not to show much feeling. "Sit down and tell me what has happened."

They sat down at the extremities of the old black sofa, and Felix said, —

"To tell you the truth, I had shut myself up, and tried to be as indifferent to the election as if I 'd been one of the fishes in the Lapp, till the noises got too strong for me. But I only saw the tail end of the disturbance. The poor noisy simpletons seemed to give way before the magistrates and the constables. I hope no-

body has been much hurt. The fear is that they may turn out again by and by; their giving way so soon may not be altogether a good sign. There 's a great number of heavy fellows in the town. If they go and drink more, the last end may be worse than the first. However — "

Felix broke off, as if this talk were futile, clasped his hands behind his head, and leaning backward, looked at Esther, who was looking at him.

" May I stay here a little while ? " he said, after a moment, which seemed long.

" Pray do," said Esther, colouring. To relieve herself she took some work and bowed her head over her stitching. It was in reality a little heaven to her that Felix was there, but she saw beyond it, — saw that by and by he would be gone and that they should be farther on their way, not towards meeting, but parting. His will was impregnable. He was a rock, and she was no more to him than the white clinging mist-cloud.

" I wish I could be sure that you see things just as I do," he said abruptly, after a minute's silence.

" I am sure you see them much more wisely than I do," said Esther, almost bitterly, without looking up.

" There are some people one must wish to judge one truly. Not to wish it would be mere hardness. I know you think I am a man without feeling, — at least, without strong affections. You think I love nothing but my own resolutions."

"Suppose I reply in the same sort of strain?" said Esther, with a little toss of the head.

"How?"

"Why, that you think me a shallow woman, incapable of believing what is best in you, setting down everything that is too high for me as a deficiency."

"Don't parry what I say. Answer me." There was an expression of painful beseeching in the tone with which Felix said this. Esther let her work fall on her lap and looked at him, but she was unable to speak.

"I want you to tell me — once — that you know it would be easier to me to give myself up to loving and being loved, as other men do, when they can, than to —"

This breaking-off in speech was something quite new in Felix. For the first time he had lost his self-possession, and turned his eyes away. He was at variance with himself. He had begun what he felt that he ought not to finish.

Esther, like a woman as she was, — a woman waiting for love, never able to ask for it, — had her joy in these signs of her power; but they made her generous, not chary, as they might have done if she had had a pettier disposition. She said, with deep yet timid earnestness, —

"What you have chosen to do has only convinced me that your love would be the better worth having."

All the finest part of Esther's nature trembled in those words. To be right in great, memorable moments is perhaps the thing we need most desire for ourselves.

Felix as quick as lightning turned his look

upon her again, and leaning forward, took her sweet hand and held it to his lips some moments before he let it fall again and raised his head.

"We shall always be the better for thinking of each other," he said, leaning his elbow on the back of the sofa, and supporting his head as he looked at her with calm sadness. "This thing can never come to me twice over. It is my knighthood. That was always a business of great cost."

He smiled at her, but she sat biting her inner lip, and pressing her hands together. She desired to be worthy of what she reverenced in Felix, but the inevitable renunciation was too difficult. She saw herself wandering through the future weak and forsaken. The charming sauciness was all gone from her face, but the memory of it made this childlike dependent sorrow all the more touching.

"Tell me what you would — " Felix burst out, leaning nearer to her; but the next instant he started up, went to the table, took his cap in his hand, and came in front of her.

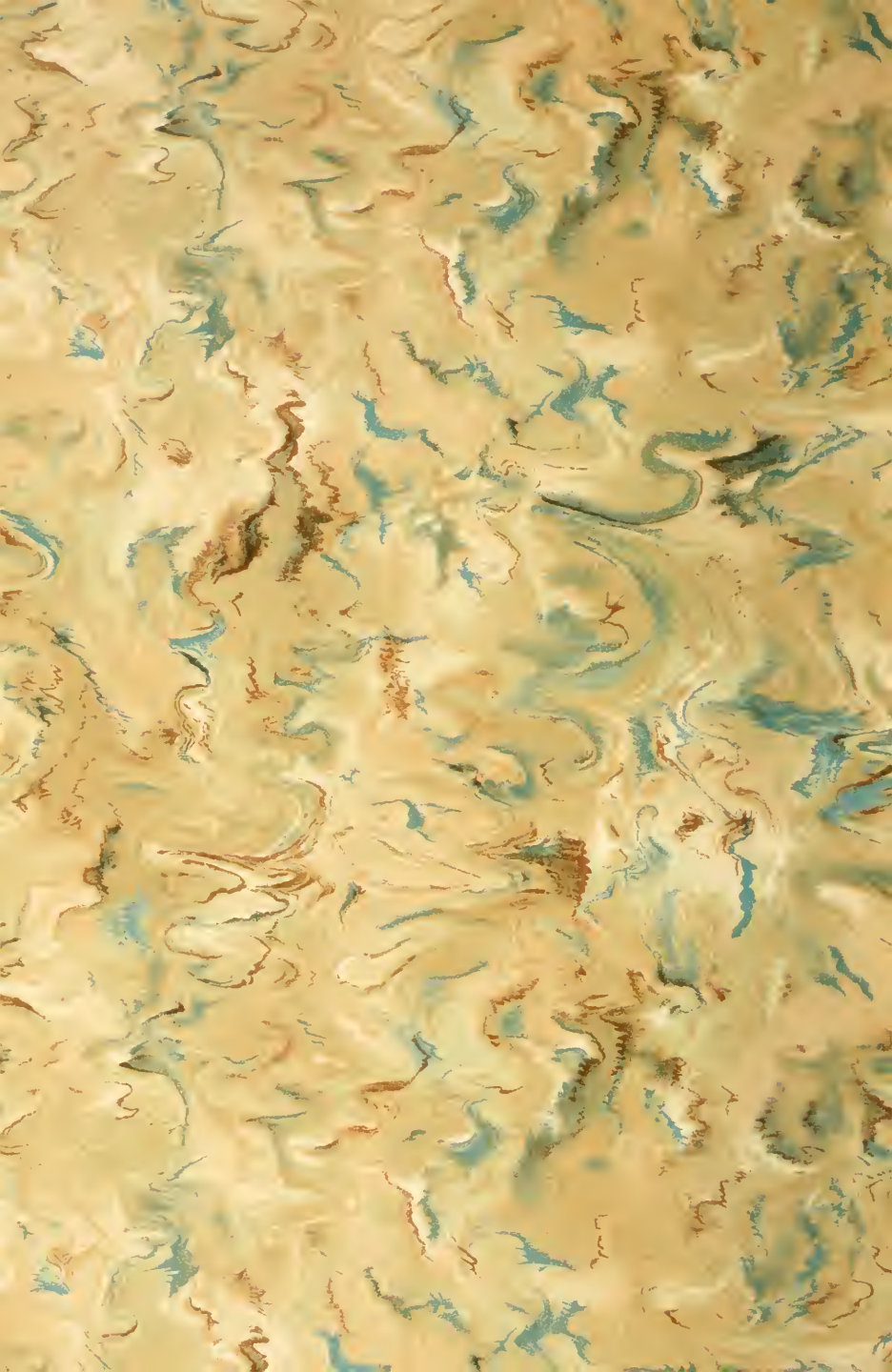
"Good-by," he said very gently, not daring to put out his hand. But Esther put up hers instead of speaking. He just pressed it, and then went away.

She heard the doors close behind him, and felt free to be miserable. She cried bitterly. If she might have married Felix Holt, she could have been a good woman. She felt no trust that she could ever be good without him.

Felix reproached himself. He would have done better not to speak in that way. But the prompting to which he had chiefly listened had

been the desire to prove to Esther that he set a high value on her feelings. He could not help seeing that he was very important to her; and he was too simple and sincere a man to ape a sort of humility which would not have made him any the better if he had possessed it. Such pretences turn our lives into sorry dramas. And Felix wished Esther to know that her love was dear to him as the beloved dead are dear. He felt that they must not marry, — that they would ruin each other's lives. But he had longed for her to know fully that his will to be always apart from her was renunciation, not an easy preference. In this he was thoroughly generous; and yet, now some subtle, mysterious conjuncture of impressions and circumstances had made him speak, he questioned the wisdom of what he had done. Express confessions give definiteness to memories that might more easily melt away without them; and Felix felt for Esther's pain as the strong soldier, who can march on hungering without fear that he shall faint, feels for the young brother, — the maiden-cheeked conscript whose load is too heavy for him.

END OF VOL. I FELIX HOLT



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